

## ABSTRACT

WYNN, III, WILLIAM H. A Different Kind of Leader for a Different Kind of School? A Study of Two Early College High Schools in North Carolina. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance Fusarelli).

Early College High Schools (ECHS) allow students to combine high school and college curriculum and graduate with a high school diploma and transferable college credit, with students in many cases earning associate's degrees. ECHS schools have a tendency to focus on students that have been underserved in the education system.

Currently there is a large amount of research and literature on school leadership and traditional high school principal leadership styles (Walters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), however, there is minimal research on leadership styles in nontraditional academic environments like ECHS schools. With over 70 ECHS schools in existence and plans to establish more in North Carolina, there will be a need for school leaders to lead nontraditional or "innovative" schools like Early College High Schools.

For this study, two ECHS schools were identified in North Carolina. Interviews with the ECHS principals of these two schools as well as focus groups of staff and teachers of these schools were conducted.

Findings of this study conclude that school leadership in the two North Carolina ECHS schools identified is situational, with ECHS principals invoking characteristics of various leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, authoritative, and "*laissez-faire*". The teachers and staff at the two ECHS schools had accurate perception of their respective principal's leadership styles.

Recommendations are made with implications on how policy makers, educational leaders, and college preparation programs can prepare future high school principals to lead traditional high schools and nontraditional high schools like Early College High Schools.

Keywords : Early College; Principal leadership styles

A Different Kind of Leader for a Different Kind of School? A Study of Two Early College  
High Schools in North Carolina

by  
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## DEDICATION

This endeavor and labor is dedicated to my grandfather, William Herman Wynn, Sr.

*He did so that I could...*

## **BIOGRAPHY**

William H. Wynn, III is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wynn, Jr. of Alberta, VA. William was born in Lawrenceville, VA on January 23, 1969. Amid being born with a hearing and speech impairment, William was able to participate and win oratorical and public speaking on local and state levels during his formative years, and graduated with honors from Brunswick Senior High School in June, 1987. He attended North Carolina Central University (NCCU) on an academic scholarship, majoring in Biology with a concentration in Pre-Med. While at NCCU, he made the Dean's List and participated in many campus activities. He graduated with a B.S. degree in May 1991. William worked odd jobs, including working for the family business, until under the encouragement of his mother, who was an elementary principal at the time, became a substitute teacher in 1994. He subbed every day for the whole school year and was offered a job teaching Biology in 1995. While teaching, William earned his teaching credentials and a Master's in Educational Administration and Supervision from Virginia State University in December 2001. He has served as a teacher and administrator in both Virginia and North Carolina. He currently serves as principal of Middle College of Forsyth High School in Winston-Salem, NC. He has one sister, Erica L. Wynn, MD, MPH.

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First, I give praise, glory, and honor to Almighty God and to His son Jesus Christ, who has shown me grace, mercy, and favor over and over and for giving me the ability to complete this task. Because Jesus came and died for me I am...

Although this work is dedicated to my grandfather after who I was named, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my other grandparents: Ida Mallory Wynn, Leroy Gilliam, and Gertrude Stith Gilliam. Although they are gone physically from me, I can still feel their presence. Because of them, I am...

To my parents, William H. Wynn, Jr. and Dora Gilliam Wynn, thank you for your unyielding love, support and encouragement not only through this journey, but all throughout my life.

Dad, thanks for instilling in me values, for providing abundantly for me and for seeing in me that I needed guidance and structure, even when I did not see and all along the way molding me into the man I have become. Mom, thanks for being my rock, my advocate, and a professional role model, showing me that hard work does pay off. You often believed in me when I did not believe in myself. I told the two of you when I was a little boy that I would be a doctor one day. This may not be the doctor you envisioned, but here I am...

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

NCLB – No Child Left Behind

NASSP – National Association of Secondary School Principals

NASBE – National Association of State Boards of Education

ECHS, ECHSs – Early College High Schools

ECHSI – Early College High School Initiative

MCHS – Middle College High School

JFF – Jobs for the Future

PLCs- Professional Learning Communities

GPA – Grade Point Averages

IHE – Institutions of Higher Education

EOC – End of Course tests

NCTWCS – North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

SIP – School Improvement Plans

ECT – Early College of Tree\* (\* pseudonym)

TCPS – Tree County Public Schools\*

TCCC- Tree County Community College\*

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

ECBSU – Early College of Bloom State University\*

PCS – Powell County Schools\*

BSU – Bloom State University\*

SIT – School Improvement Team

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In 2001, under the leadership of President George W. Bush, the United States Congress passed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, commonly referred to as NCLB. NCLB arose from the demand by legislators, business community, and to a degree, the American public at large, to evaluate and improve the measures school districts in this country utilize to increase the academic rigor of high school courses (NCLB, 2006). Much like the landmark 1983 *Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* report that served as a catalyst for educational change (Voskuil, 1999), NCLB has caused school districts to restructure the educational system with heavy emphasis on standards, testing, and accountability (Fusarelli, 2004; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). When statistics such as a 30% national drop-out rate and 50% drop-out rate for minority students (Swanson, 2003; Balfanz & Legters, 2004; NASSP, 2004; Taliaferro, 2005; Lerner and Brand, 2006; NASBE, 2010a; NASBE 2010b) are factored in, it is increasingly evident school reform is needed, rooted in the beliefs of accountability and flexibility.

One approach to delivering educational services that meet every student's academic and learning needs has been to restructure and remodel traditional comprehensive high schools into smaller nontraditional high schools. One of the more successful educational models for improving graduation rates is the Early College High School (ECHS) (Darling-Hammond, Aness, & Ort, 2002; Pellerin, 2005).

#### **Early College High Schools**

Early College High Schools (ECHS) allow students to combine high school and college curriculum and graduate with a high school diploma and transferable college credit, with

students in many cases earning an associate's degree simultaneously. Surprisingly, ECHS have a tendency to center on students that have traditionally been underserved in the educational system. The category of traditionally underserved students includes those that are socioeconomically disadvantaged, racial minorities, and potential first-generation college and university students, as compared to those who are typically depicted in the K-12 education system or in society as a whole (Bragg, Kim, & Rubin, 2005). According to Bragg, Kim, and Rubin (2005), traditionally underserved students are experiencing higher success rates in terms of graduating from early college high schools than their peers in the same category at traditional comprehensive high schools. Early college programs are affording hundreds of thousands of high school students the opportunity to experience an advanced program of study prior to leaving high school (Andrews, 2001).

Early college high schools are cemented on the foundation of a strong partnership between a high school and an institution of higher education. This could be either a two-year community college or a four-year academic institution. This type of collaboration can be traced back to 1974 when the Middle College High School was established at LaGuardia Community College in New York City.

### **Core Principles**

The Early College High Schools Initiative provides fundamental beliefs that are guided through core principles. These core principles are:

- Core Principle 1: Early college schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.

- Core Principle 2: Early college schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all whom are jointly accountable for student success.
- Core Principle 3: Early college schools and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credit leading to college completion.
- Core Principle 4: Early college schools engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion.
- Core Principle 5: Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement. (Jobs for the Future, 2008).

### **North Carolina New Schools Project**

In North Carolina, early college high schools are considered part of the North Carolina New Schools Project. Founded in 2003, the North Carolina New Schools Project has partnered with businesses, educational agencies, and local and state government to create, develop, and support innovative schools with a vision of “every student in North Carolina graduates ready for college, careers, and life” (North Carolina New Schools, 2013). Schools like the early college high schools are considered “innovative and cooperative high schools” in North Carolina. Innovative and cooperative high schools in North Carolina share six essential Design Principles which direct the work of the schools. North Carolina innovative schools:

- Believe in a common set of high standards and expectations that ensure every student graduate ready for college – schools maintain a common set of standards for all in order to eliminate the harmful consequences of tracking and sorting students.
- Uphold common standards for high quality, rigorous instruction that promote teaching and learning.
- Demonstrate personalization – educators must know students well to help them achieve academically.
- Redefine professionalism by creating a shared vision so that all school staff takes responsibility for the success of every student.
- Work forms a purposeful design where the use of time, space, and resources ensure that best practices become common practice.
- Empower shared leadership embedded in a culture of high expectations and a collaborative work environment to ensure the success of each student.

(NC New Schools, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

With over 70 Early College High Schools in existence in North Carolina and with plans to establish more, principals and school leaders may be required to lead and facilitate learning in a nontraditional, or “innovative” environment. Research has shown there is a direct correlation between school leadership and student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, 2005). However, the question arises as to what type of leader, or -more specifically, what type of leadership style, -is required to successfully lead students and staff in an early college environment?

There currently exists a large amount of research and literature on school leadership and traditional high school principal leadership styles (Marks & Printy, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2007; Walters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003); however, there is little research on what leadership styles work best in nontraditional academic environments. There is a need and demand for ECHS principals who understand how to implement, organize, and support these types of schools to make certain students are academically successful (Davis et.al, 2005). Concurrently, schools of education and policymakers will have to address the challenge of producing school leaders who can meet the new and different demands of nontraditional school programs as part of principal preparation programs. Historically, these programs have focused on the role of the traditional school principal, with little or no exposure to nontraditional school models (Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). In most states, a state principal certificate will allow a principal to perform at any level of public school-elementary, middle, and high-without regards to the particular specialty of the school or the background of the principal.

Since Early College high school models are relatively new, many principals of ECHSs are being hired to open new schools/programs with little to no training and experience with this model (Carter, 2004; Slade, 2006), although they may possess traditional high school experience. Characteristics and leadership skills needed to create and lead an effective ECHS are similar to those needed to create and lead an effective traditional high school to a degree; however, the unique characteristics of the Early College High Schools require unique skills that are not normally part of a traditional principal's educational background or preparation (Michael, 2003).

Additional research and literature is needed on the leadership styles, practices, and skills of effective principals of Early College High Schools in order to nurture, develop, and support those individuals seeking to become principals as well as those who are already named principals, and to assist those who are charged with training, hiring, and sustaining new and future principals (Fry, Bottoms, O'Neill, & Walker, 2007; Grey, Fry, Bottoms & O'Neil, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study will examine the leadership styles utilized by two principals of Early Colleges in North Carolina. Each Early College High School being studied has distinguishing characteristics. Given the uniqueness of the Early College programs in general, principals of Early College programs should be equipped with a different set of skills. As school administrators, principals are trained in the different learning styles and learning needs of students. Similarly, principals of ECHSs should be outfitted with knowledge of different educational models and different leadership styles so that they may lead any type of school while drawing on the best components of each model or leadership style in order to effectively and successfully lead the school to which they have been assigned.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What are the leadership styles used by two principals of Early College High Schools in North Carolina?
2. How do teachers and staff in two Early College High Schools in North Carolina perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has broad implications. First, it is significant in that it provides policymakers, researchers, boards of education, and those who are responsible for recruiting, hiring, and training Early College principals with knowledge to better understand the characteristics of effective ECHS principals as described by actual ECHS principals, teachers, and staff who work in this environment. Second, this study provides data to school districts who may be considering establishing ECHS schools as a way to increase their graduation rate, reduce their drop-out rate, and to increase educational opportunities to underserved and underrepresented students, particularly in North Carolina, a state considered to be a leader among states utilizing the Early College model, as about one-third of all Early Colleges are found in North Carolina (North Carolina New Schools, 2013)

### **Definitions of Terms**

Authoritative leadership – a process where the leader dictates all actions, control and procedures without participation or input of subordinates.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation – an organization that founded and initially funded the Early College High School Initiative.

Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) – a group comprised of educational organizations dedicated to supporting the mission of the Early College High School of increasing high school graduation rate and increasing postsecondary success of traditionally underserved students.

Early College High Schools (ECHS) – schools that blend high school and college in a rigorous and supportive academic program, allowing students to earn a high school diploma and up to two years of transferable college credits and/or associate's degree.

Laissez-faire leadership – a process where the leader provides no guidance and subordinates are left to make decisions. Principals who use this type of leadership allow group members to set the parameters they will work in with rare interventions.

Middle College High Schools (MCHS) – predecessor to Early College High Schools; schools that are situated on post-secondary institutions' campuses that allow students to earn their high school diploma and transferable college credits.

Nontraditionally defined ECHS – an ECHS that has deviated, slightly or significantly, from one or more of the core principles as described by the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI). This occurs as a result in local ECHS decision-makers deciding to appeal to different population of students.

North Carolina New Schools Project – initiated in 2003 by North Carolina's Office of the Governor and the North Carolina Education Cabinet with start-up funds from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; dedicated to goal of “engaging all students with powerful approaches to teaching and learning and graduate all students ready for college, careers and life”. (New School Project, 2013).

Situational leadership – process where no one style of leadership prevails. Principals who use situational leadership are task-oriented and can be characterized by four characteristics: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating.

Traditionally defined ECHS – an ECHS that has remained true to the core principles prescribed by the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI).

Traditionally underserved students – students who are categorized as socioeconomically disadvantaged, racial minorities and first generation individuals who are not represented in

colleges and universities in relation to their representation in the K-12 educational system or society at large.

Transactional leadership – motivating and governing subordinates by appealing to their own self-interest. Principals who exhibit transactional leadership display managerial behaviors associated with constructive and corrective transactions. Most commonly used form of leadership.

Transformational leadership – process where leaders and followers collaborate on a higher level and reach consensus. Transformational principals influence their staff by appealing to their self-perceptions and allowing the staff to contribute to the overall good of the group and the school.

### **Overview of the Study**

The study will use an interpretative qualitative design to identify the dominant leadership styles of two ECHS principals from the viewpoint of the two ECHS principals as well as teachers and staff at the respective schools (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2002). Data will be collected through interviews of the selected principals, focus groups of teachers and staff at the identified ECHSs, and analysis of each school's website.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature as it relates Early College High Schools and the basics of the model and strategies associated with the initiative. Chapter 2 also will provide a review of the literature on leadership styles – authoritative, “laissez-faire”, situational, transformational, and transactional. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology used to conduct the

research, with detailed information on the design study and data collection. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings of the research and chapter 5 will summarize the findings and identify areas of future research as it relates to this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The focus of this study is to examine the dominant leadership styles of principals in selected Early College High Schools in North Carolina and the perceptions of teachers of principals' leadership styles in these nontraditional schools. In an effort to gather a better understanding of how principals' leadership styles impact Early College High Schools, this literature review will examine the following areas of scholarship: Early College High Schools, and three leadership styles of principals – transformational, transactional, and “laissez-faire”. The literature on Early College High Schools reviews the theory behind the model and the strategies of the initiative. The review of the literature on leadership styles of principals includes defining the three dominant leadership styles used by principals and a discussion on the way leadership styles of principals have been conceptualized.

#### **Early College High Schools**

America's high schools are obsolete. By obsolete, I don't just mean that our high schools are broken, flawed, and under-funded – though a case could be made for every one of those points. By obsolete, I mean that our high schools – even when they're working exactly as designed – cannot teach our kids what they need to know today. (Bill Gates, 2005)

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), every American needs an education through two years of college or vocational training. The challenge here is how we ensure that students are adequately prepared in high school and are able to be successful in their postsecondary experiences. A look at some of the more prevalent inclinations in the K-16 system illustrates the discrepancies in educational outcomes for students across income and racial/ethnic lines. Research shows that only about 11% of the low-income eighth grade students in the class of 2001 are expected to earn a college degree by 2014 and students from the middle and upper-income classes are five times more likely to earn a 2-or 4-year degree than low-income students (Goldberg, 2007). Data such as this support the demand for radical and inventive approaches to address the gaps in the K-12 system that hinder low-income and other traditionally underrepresented students from engaging in the post-secondary environment. There is a wide array of high school efforts targeted at increasing college readiness for all students, especially students who belong to one or more of the following categories: racial minority, low socioeconomic, English language learners, and first generation attenders.

One such effort is the Early College High School (ECHS) model. The model is premised on providing underserved students the opportunity to take college courses while in high school. ECHS schools are small in nature—schools of 450 students or less across grade level levels 9-12.

They provide students opportunities to have a deliberate college experience while simultaneously earning high school and college credits. The premise of the Early College High School model is that academic rigor and challenge, not remediation, will address the needs of students who are marginalized in traditional school settings (Berger, Adelman, & Cole, 2010). By earning college credits while still in high school, students may be motivated to see themselves as active participants in the postsecondary experience. ECHS schools are designed so that within 4 or 5 years of entering high school, students have the opportunity to earn at least two years of college credit (Jobs for the Future, 2002).

#### *Background of the Early College Movement*

The idea for Early College High Schools can trace its origin to another innovative high school reform model, the Middle College High School (MCHS). The first Middle College High was created in 1974 by Dr. Janet Lieberman on the campus of LaGuardia Community College in New York City. Dr. Lieberman's mission was to create an educational environment where underserved youths' needs could be met academically, vocationally, and affectively while encouraging and showing them that a college education was achievable (Lieberman, 2004). Dr. Lieberman established the middle college program because she believed that forming a small, nurturing, innovative high school on a college campus would capitalize on the "power of place". By actually being physically on a college campus, she believed underserved students would be inspired, stimulated, and motivated in believing a college education was attainable.

In 2000, Dr. Lieberman and Dr. Cecilia Cunningham, co-directors of the Middle College National Consortium, took the framework of the Middle College High School model a step further and conceptualized and created the Early College High School model. The initial pilot of

the ECHS model, which was funded by the Ford Foundation, was aimed at serving underachieving high school students and allowing them to take college courses in their eleventh and twelfth grade years of high school. These students would be able to earn an associate's degree in a shorter period of time by taking college courses earlier (Lieberman, 2004). While based on principles of the Middle College High School model, the Early College High School model would add new structural elements, such as stronger collaboration between secondary schools and institutions of higher learning and a more formal opportunity for accelerated learning options (Lieberman, 2004). The ECHS model as prescribed by Lieberman and Cunningham has the following objectives:

- Target and identify students who are underserved by the regular schools;
- Insist on a cooperative relationship between the district's high school administration and the college president;
- Offer students a different sequence of courses from the ninth grade to the associate's degree, which could be achieved in five years or less, instead of the six years it typically takes students to earn an associate's degree.
- Combine the resources of a high school physically located on the college campus with the facilities on the college campus (gym, library, cafeteria, etc.), making all resources and facilities readily available to the ECHS student;
- Necessitate and activate college campus collaboration from the college administrative structure by embedding faculty, admissions, counseling, and finance under a college-appointed administrator;
- Enhance the role of the high school faculty; and

- Incorporate high school and college study in an articulated program.

In concurrence with these objectives, the theoretical foundation of the Early College High School model is stemmed from research in developmental psychology, which emphasizes certain key principles. First, Lieberman believes that intellectual development is a continuous process: research shows there is little or no difference between a student at the end of the twelfth grade and the beginning of college matriculation (Lieberman, 2004). Therefore, learning should be viewed as a continuous cycle; transitions should be smooth; and the curriculum between high school and college should be coordinated. Lieberman also feels that academic and personal challenges are strong motivators for achievement. Furthermore, she believes that the presence of positive role models improves behavior. Along those lines, Lieberman stresses that when teachers play an active role in the reform and learning process in general, teachers become more motivated for success and improve the success rates of their students. Finally, Dr. Lieberman views the structural and theoretical modules of the ECHS model as inseparable; all of the components have to be present in order for the model to be successful.

#### *Early College High School Initiative*

Having faith in the framework of Lieberman's model, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation invested \$350 million in the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) in 2002. Along with support from the Carnegie Foundation of New York, The Ford Foundation, The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and other philanthropic organizations, three Early College High Schools opened during the 2002-2003 school year, one of which was located in North Carolina – The Early College at Guilford.

ECHSI operates on two goals: (1) advance the secondary experience for high schools students, specifically the group of students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the postsecondary environment, and (2) increase the number of students who will be ready for college as well as increasing the positive college experience of these students (Berger, Adelman, & Cole, 2010). In order to reach these two goals, the ECHSI hold true to the integrity of the Middle College concept by making sure that participating schools incorporate the small school approach, provide meaningful college exposure to its students, offer prescribed academic support, and ensure students have meaningful relationships with caring adults in a student-centered learning environment (Nodine, 2009).

Although the Early College High School model relies heavily on the Middle College High School model, I have discovered that the Early College model differs in two ways. The first significant difference is ECHS schools offer and expect all of their students to earn a substantial number of transferable college credits while still in high school, while MCHS schools do not stress or expect all students to earn college credits, although it is an option. The second difference is that not all ECHS are physically located on college campuses as are MCHS schools.

Another vital participant in the implementation of the ECHSI was Jobs for the Future (JFF), an action/research and policy organization that endorses and promotes pioneering reform in education. JFF had the responsibility to coordinate, manage, and advocate for ECHSI (Jobs for the Future, 2002). JFF had the task of developing relationships with organizations that were interested in establishing and maintaining ECHS schools. JFF offered these organizations the opportunities to build professional learning committees (PLCs) and alliances among organizations that traditionally had not worked together. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

initially invested in seven partner organizations, including JFF, to launch the first 100 schools of the initiative; however, this group quickly expanded to 13 partner organizations, or intermediaries, as they became known as, with JFF serving as the lead intermediary. These 13 intermediary organizations comprised the foundation of the ECHSI and are devoted to marrying the experiences, both secondary and postsecondary, of students who normally would not have considered themselves to be “college material” (Berger et al., 2010). The ECHSI was initially guided in 2002 by a set of core principles, which provided the theoretical framework for the first five years of the program. The principles were revised and ratified in 2008 to reflect a set of core principles that better embodied the vision of the initiative (see Table 1 below).

Perhaps what really sets the Early College High School Initiative apart from other school reform efforts is the belief that most students, not just those who are considered academically advanced, can enroll in college courses and be successful in their transition into college. Nodine (2009) noted that before the implementation of the ECHS model, and without the Advanced Placement (AP) program, there was no significant “curricular coherence and sequencing between the senior year of high school and postsecondary education” (p. 6). ECHS schools have the power and potential to be a vehicle that drives students along a seamless route from secondary to postsecondary opportunities.

#### **TABLE 1**

### **COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL INITIATIVE CORE PRINCIPLES**

Core Principle 1: Early Colleges are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.

Core Principle 2: Early College High Schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success.

Core Principle 3: Early Colleges and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credit leading to college completion.

Core Principle 4: Early Colleges engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills, as well as behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion.

Core Principle 5: Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement.

(taken from [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org))

#### *Early College and Dual Enrollment*

Lieberman (2004) believes the goals and foundation of the ECHSI is to change the pattern of low expectations and desperation among students who are the most underserved and underrepresented in the education system. The initiative challenges the notion that underserved and underrepresented students are not able to be successful while still in high school (Webb & Mayka, 2011). Traditionally, first-generation, low-income, and minority students do not take the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school through the dual-enrollment program. The dual enrollment program is known by many names – dual credit, concurrent enrollment, college in high school, and joint enrollment (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2010; Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). Regardless of the name used, the typical program allows high school juniors and seniors to take college courses that will allow students to earn high school and college credits concurrently.

College courses are often offered to high schools students for no or discounted tuition and can be substituted for high school course requirements needed to earn their high school diplomas. Taking college courses for free or discounted tuition is viewed as an attraction or draw for students from lower socio-economic households as they can reduce the often-overwhelming financial cost of paying for postsecondary institution. The escalating cost of postsecondary education is often that biggest barrier for students who want to further their education.

Besides the obvious financial benefits of dual enrollment programs, there is a psychological one as well. Most dual enrollment programs occur on college campuses, allowing high school students to experience firsthand the college culture, both academically and socially, while simultaneously having the guidance and support of those in their high schools (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2007; Kleiner & Lewis, 2007). In addition, Berger et al. (2010) have documented that students who take college courses while still in high school were more likely to go to a four-year college, have higher GPAs, and earn more college credits in their first years of college than students who did not take college courses in high school. Research (Abell, 2007; Adelman, 2006) also show that students who have earned at least 20 college credits by the end of their first year of college are more likely to graduate from college. These statements lend credence to the idea that if underrepresented and underserved students were to participate in the early college program, they would increase their chances of being successful and graduating from college (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2010).

### *Early College Outcomes*

This section will look at the most recent outcome data on access and persistence rates according to the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI). The following data accounts for the first four Early College Core Principles. There is no data to support Core Principle # 5 as of yet. In addition, the data regarding college completion rates is inconclusive due to the fact that the first cohort of graduates graduated from ECHS schools in 2012 and has yet to graduate from a 4-year college or university. However, the data shows favorable outcomes for Early College students.

*Core Principle 1: Early Colleges are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.* Research shows that ECHS schools are working attentively to increase the enrollments of minority and low-income students (AIR/SRI, 2008). Berger et al. (2010) found that 70% of ECHS students are students of color and 59% of students attending ECHS schools qualified for free or reduced lunch, the measure used to identify the socioeconomic status of students.

*Core Principle 2: Early College High Schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success.* The collaboration between the K-12 school system and an institution of higher education (IHE) is an important gauge of the success of ECHS schools as both entities must work together to ensure Early College students have the academic and social support needed to be successful in a postsecondary environment (Berger et al., 2010; Hooker & Brand, 2009). About 65% of all ECHS schools partner with a 2-year IHE or community college/junior college, which is not surprising as most community colleges are designed to serve a diverse population of students and they have admissions policies that gravitate towards

underrepresented students. About 24% of ECHS schools are associated with a 4-year IHE, while 11% of ECHS schools are linked to both 2-year and 4-year IHE (Webb & Mayka, 2011).

The type of IHE that an ECHS school connects with is critical as it relates directly to the notion of the “power of place” (Cunningham & Matthews, 2007; Lieberman, 2004; Nodine, 2009). About half of all ECHS schools are physically located on a college campus, while 47% are located in traditional or freestanding buildings and 3% are on tribal reservations to serve Native American students (Jobs for the Future, 2010). By actually being on a college campus, students are better able to identify with other college students and envision themselves as college students with more confidence in their abilities and in themselves (Hooker & Brand, 2009).

*Core Principle 3: Early Colleges and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credits leading to college completion.* This core principle is very different than the core principle in 2003. Initially, the second core principle in the 2003 version stated that ALL ECHS would earn an associate’s degree or up to two years of college credit (JFF, 2003). However, as more Early College High Schools were established, many of them made some adjustments to this principle. Some ECHS schools worked towards allowing some students, but not all, to attain an associate’s degree, while other programs were geared towards just getting students to earn some college credits, even if it was not two years’ worth (Adelman, Berger & Cole, 2010). This current core principle #3 makes it a priority that ALL ECHS students will earn at least one year of college credit.

This has proven to be a challenge for many ECHS schools, as indicated by a student survey during the 2007-2008 school year which revealed that only 61% of ECHS students had

taken at least one college course (Webb & Mayka, 2011). However, further data shows that progress is being made, as reflected in data from the graduating class of 2009, representing 64 ECHS schools. In this graduating class of approximately 3,000 students, the average student graduated with at least 20 or more college credits, 39% of these students earned at least one year of transferable college credits, 25% of this class received their associate's degree or two years equivalent of college credits (JFF, 2010).

*Core Principle 4: Early Colleges engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills, as well as behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion.* Considering the background and needs of typical ECHS students, providing support for these students is a vital part of the ECHS model. The dilemma for most ECHS schools is trying to find a way to teach students how to successfully maneuver and take advantages of what resources are available to students in college without becoming a crutch for students and offering too much support to students, to the point where students are not able to function successfully on their own once they matriculate in college.

Most ECHS schools provide formal support in the areas of literacy skills, mathematics, research, and college life courses (AIR & SRI, 2008). Additionally, most ECHS schools provide their students and parents with workshops and seminars on applying for colleges and financial aid. Research supports the notion that the transition from high school to college is often the one area where most students and parents find it difficult to maneuver (Kirst, 2004). ECHS schools often try to assist students and parents with this transition.

### **Leadership Styles of Principals**

Researchers agree that leadership is mutually established by leaders and followers (Howell & Shamir, 2005). A leader's model of leadership directly impacts followers, so followers are the best people to gauge whether a leader's leadership style has any effects (Hollander, 1995). Leadership models should be based on the roles of the followers, their knowledge, and psychological states (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005; McCann, Langford, & Rawlings, 2006).

The demands for higher accountability and increased student achievement, which are typically, tied to high-stake tests, have created a somewhat uncertain environment for principals. The stress and desire for higher test scores may lead principals to become more dictatorial, making crucial decisions about the curriculum, instructional delivery, and instructional presentation in the schools themselves. This type of leadership has proven to be ineffective and hard to sustain over a long period of time (Glasser, 1998; Lezotte & McKee, 2006). In this type of environment, decisions are often made without input from faculty and staff and may not be in the best academic interest of students. Evidence of this type of environment may include the use of "drill and kill" test preparation strategies, and "teaching to the test" (Popham, 2001). Coincidentally, research has shown that schools that have adopted such tactics have shown very little increase in test scores or in student achievement (Thompson, Madhuri & Taylor, 2008).

### *Building School Capacity*

As the instructional leader of a school, the principal is directly responsible for what occurred in the classrooms of his or her building as measured by student achievement. This means that the principal directly influences the school's capacity to raise test scores and student

achievement. This is a shift in the thinking about how a school operates; typically, it has been believed that because teachers had direct contact with students, teachers had exclusive control over the content and climate of the classroom (King & Newmann, 2001). As a result, principals are challenged with finding ways to raise student achievement by building school capacity.

Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) defined school capacity as the cooperative influence of a school staff to increase student achievement. Teacher capacity is defined as the beliefs of the teacher, through the guidance of their administrators, in their ability to improve student learning (Bredson, 2005). For the purpose of this research, I contend that principals must make decisions, both organizational and curricular, that directly impact the end result of teacher capacity on student achievement. A school administrator has to select a leadership style to carry out the missions and goals of a school. The style of leadership practiced by the principal directly influences school capacity. Teachers make decisions in their respective classrooms as a response to the leadership styles used by their building administrator.

In order to increase student achievement, an effective principal chooses a leadership style that positively encourages school capacity. Lezotte and McKee (2006) noted that in order to improve test scores and ultimately increase student achievement, an effective principal must create and facilitate a process for change. This process requires leadership skills coupled with management skills, while simultaneously planning and using effective instructional strategies.

### *Defining Leadership*

So, the essential question becomes – what is leadership? Defining leadership has been compared to defining love – the words conveyed on paper never seem to capture the feeling (Lashway, 1999). Kouzes and Posner (2002) believe leadership is evident when the leader

promotes certain basic tenants, which include committing to modeling the way by finding one's own voice, by explaining personal issues, and by lining up actions with values. Northouse (2013) puts it this way – “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5).

A leader is one who must challenge the process by searching for opportunities which help him or her develop as a leader. A leader must empower others by promoting and nurturing cooperation and allowing others to participate in decision-making. Perhaps, most importantly, a leader must inspire, distinguish between those who contribute significantly to the overall goals of the organization, and celebrate when goals are met or exceeded (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

A preponderance of research on leadership deals with the biographical or historical perspective of it. Burns (1978) was one of the first researchers to focus on the philosophy of leadership. In his research and subsequent works, Burns deliberated on several themes. First, Burns defined the elements of leadership, which he characterized as power and purpose. Next, Burns viewed the relationship between power and purpose, where power is used for a particular purpose according to the needs, motives, and values of the leader and those who follows.

Interesting to note, Burns (1978) utilized the theory of moral stages of development to explain the correlation between motives and values in the leadership realm. Burns insisted that leadership lifts people from lower to higher-level needs and moral development, and that true leaders are typically self-actualizing people who are inspired to grow, to be successful, and to accomplish goals.

### *Principal Leadership*

Most school principals do not identify their actions and styles the same way teachers do. In the minds of teachers, their perceptions become their reality. Teachers ultimately view their own sense of power and accountability for student achievement, or lack thereof, as the reality for that school (Martin, Crossland, & Johnson, 2001). It is the goal of the principal to communicate what is important in a school and to set the tone in regards to the values, mission, and motives of the school. Research on the effects of different types of leadership in traditional school environments shows principals who demonstrated controlling or calculating behaviors often did so at the expense of the school's academic and social tones, impacting the morale, involvement, communication, and relationships of all stakeholders (Thompson, Madhuri, & Taylor, 2008).

The role of the principal is vital to improving student achievement through leadership style and school capacity (Moos, Krejsler, & Koford, 2008). Lazaridou (2006) expressed that leadership strategies geared towards improvement must be purposeful and relevant to the school culture. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) documented that the quality school leadership increases student achievement.

### *Types of Leadership Styles*

Effective leadership is characterized by the selection of the appropriate leadership style based on the needs of the followers. The use of one type of leadership style or another affords the school principal the option to choose from a variety of tools and resources in order to best meet the needs of his or her school. There are many dominant types of leadership styles used primarily in schools today. However, I will highlight the following: transactional, transformational, "laissez-faire", authoritative, and situational. The remainder of this section will focus on the literature as it relates to each type of leadership.

### *Transactional Leadership*

Transactional leadership occurs when a leader dictates explicit standards for all to follow, rewarding those who comply and monitoring for those who do not follow or deviate from the prescribed course (Avolio, Bass, Berson, & Jung, 2003). Transactional leadership is focused on demands and control, with an emphasis on benefit exchange for the sole purpose of stability for the organization (Kim & Shim, 2003; Poudier, 2001). According to Robbins (2003), by clearly defining roles and task requests, a transactional leader will recognize and reward the efforts of his or her subordinates, satisfying their needs for recognition. However, Bass (1997) adds, when followers do not behave accordingly, immediate reprimand is normally given by transactional leaders.

Both Bass (1985) and Lashway (1999) contend that there is a cost-benefit exchange process associated with transactional leadership. Transactional leadership theories state ideal relationships formulated on a series of exchanges between the leader and subordinates (Northouse, 2013). The focus is clearly on rewards or sanctions in exchange for performance. The leader spells out clear expectations and in return the subordinates receive rewards for meeting the expectations set forth. In prescribing to this type of leadership style, the leader is viewed as the authority with a defined power base. The transactional leader focuses on motivating subordinates through rewards or disciplines, with explicit details of what types of behavior warrants specific rewards or consequences. The transactional leader observes actively whether mistakes, errors, or deviations are made and when subordinates are wrong in their actions (Bass & Avolio, 1994). He or she may not consider the individual needs of their subordinates nor do they consider their personal development. In this type of leadership, the

focus is on the short term, with an emphasis on meeting subordinates' physical security needs. This is typically done through an economic exchange and is seen as reactive, not proactive (Bass, 1985). A transactional leader operates by giving instructions, establishing terms and conditions, and retaining ultimate control.

In transactional leadership, both the leader and subordinates are mutually dependent on each other. Whereas there is a considerable difference between the power resources of the leader and subordinates, both entities are cognizant of the disparity that exists and are accepting of the arrangement as long as the subordinates benefit in the end. Bass (1985) further expanded on the model by offering two ways in which transactional leadership can be exercised. The first way is what Bass refers to as a contingent reward system. In a contingent reward system, a subordinate is rewarded based on his or her performance level. If the subordinate reaches his or her predetermined performance goals, then the leader gives a reward to the subordinate. The rewards can be monetary, or in the form of a promotion or public recognition. An example of this in a school environment could be that teachers are given cash bonuses based on student performance on the NC End of Course (EOC) tests. In this scenario, teachers may be motivated to make sure their students do better on the EOC tests in order for them to receive the bonuses, or rewards, contingent on their performance. This model forms the premise of the "pay for performance" models many school districts in the United States have implemented. The focus here is rewarding satisfactory organizational outcomes that are directly related to the efforts of subordinates. There is an agreement about what must be done or accomplished and what rewards subordinates will earn if they honor their commitment (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1994; Berson & Linton, 2005). In essence, contingent rewards dictate what subordinates do, the amount of work

or effort expected from the subordinates, and what rewards they can expect for performing their tasks.

The second way transactional leadership is identified is what Bass (1985) refers to as management-by-exception. Whereas the former model rewards effort, the management-by-exception model penalizes subordinates for not meeting predetermined goals or standards. This model seeks to maintain the present level of performance, or “status quo”, and avoid a drop in performance, but it does not promote an increase in performance. In some aspect, the transactional leader operates under the adage “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”. An example of this model in a school environment would be a school principal who knows that in order to keep his current level of faculty and school funding, his school must maintain a minimum number of students enrolled. If the enrollment of the school decreases, the school will lose a specified number of teachers and a specified amount of dollars for instructional resources. In this situation, the motivation for the principal is not to let his student enrollment fall below the minimum number of students, lest he will lose teachers, which will lead to larger class sizes, and limited instructional resources for students to use.

Management-by-exception can be either active or passive (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Active management-by-exception occurs when a leader aggressively monitors the works of subordinates for evidence of indiscretions and deviances from the desired goals or standards and takes steps to correct the issues. On the other hand, passive management-by-exception happens when the leader allows the performance to fall below the desired levels intentionally before either punishing or warning subordinates. In active management-by-exception, the leader looks for mistakes; in passive management-by-exception, the leader waits

for mistakes to happen. The common element between contingent reward and management-by-exception is that motivation of the subordinate is external (Lashway, 1999). The fundamental difference between the two entities is relative to how the leader responds to mistakes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Bass and Avolio (1994) are quick to acknowledge that the management-by-exception model is less effective than the contingent reward model, but management-by-exception is needed in certain circumstances.

A transactional leader works best in an atmosphere where many complex tasks must be completed. While the premise of transactional leadership depends on a set of assumptions about human beings and what motivates them within an organization, this type of leadership does have its drawback. It is possible that a transactional leader may not be in a position where he or she can provide the expected rewards because of resources, time pressures, or organizational structure. He or she may not possess the necessary skills and abilities to effectively manage their subordinates. In addition, the effects of rewards and consequences often lead to the need for bigger rewards to remain effective for the subordinates, which would require additional resources. Quite often, when transactional leadership is used, there is no loyalty shown to the leader. With transactional leadership, the focus is on producing desired outcomes, but there is little enthusiasm or commitment to the actual task. Transactional leadership emphasizes management over leadership (Lashway, 1999).

### *Transformational Leadership*

In 1978, Burns (1978) used the term “transforming leadership” (p. 3) to define an association by which those in positions of leadership and those who follow challenge and encourage each other to attain higher levels of success, although it was Downton (1973) who

first used the term. According to Leithwood and Janzi (2006), transformational leadership describe a process of attaining goals in an organization where there are high levels of commitment, which allows individual members of the organization to reach their respective full potential. Wheatley (2001) views transformational leadership as a system whereby the leader is successful at getting subordinates to focus and work collaboratively on the mission, goals, and challenges of the organization.

Northouse (2013) describes transformational leadership as “a process that changes and transforms people” (p. 185). He contends that transformational leadership evokes emotions, beliefs, morals, principles, and long-term goals. It deals with gauging the motives and needs of those who follow their leaders, satisfying those needs, and valuing the worth of the followers. According to Northouse, a transformational leader is able to influence followers to achieve more than what is usually expected.

Bass (2000) affirms that transformational leadership is apparent when leaders are able to expand the interests of subordinates, when leaders are able to generate buy-in from subordinates about the mission and purpose of the organization, and when leaders are able to convince subordinates to set aside their own self-interests and work towards what is in the best interests of the organization. An effective transformational leader is able to make subordinates cognizant of their roles, contribution, and importance to the overall organization. Bass further adds that transformational leaders have the ability to appeal to the needs and wants of their subordinates, which make them in tune with subordinates’ sense of higher purpose. These types of leaders do not have to resort to using the power or leverage of their position to get a task or job done.

Yukl (1998) asserts that a transformational leader has the ability to articulate the vision of an organization clearly and appealingly, and to act with a sense of confidence and optimism in his or her actions and with subordinates. He or she is able to give emphasis to values with symbolic actions, to empower subordinates to achieve, and to lead by example. A distinctive characteristic of transformational leadership is the ability of the leader to use his or her personal influence in appealing to subordinates' values, aspirations, and approach to thinking about their work. Transformational leadership is all about gaining commitment to reaching goals and then enabling and empowering subordinates to reach those goals. By encouraging commitment over compliance, transformational leadership fosters a sense of community and belonging between everyone involved, leading each follower to feel like a stakeholder within the organization (Martin, Crossland, & Johnson, 2001). Jung and Avolio (2000) and Elmore (2004) both promote shared decision-making as one of the most important characteristics of transformational leadership. Through shared decision-making, there is a focus on shared leadership. The prevailing attitude is a "bottom up" way of thinking, where everyone within the organization can participate in the decisions of the organization, as opposed to the "top down" approach, common in many organizations.

Bass and Avolio (1994) contend there are four tools used by transformational leaders to produce results. Those tools are individualized attention, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Individualized attention refers to the transformational leader recognizing the differences that exist among his subordinates and creating opportunities for subordinates to develop personally and professionally. A transformational leader intellectually stimulates his or her subordinates by encouraging them to think about different ways of doing

things, with a focus on the both the goals and aspirations of the individual and the organization. Through inspirational motivation, the transformational leader urges subordinates to find meaning and purpose in performing their respective tasks. Lastly, idealized influence allows the transformational leader to be a role model to subordinates and to set the tone by leading by example. It is evident to me that transformational leadership stresses the more personal side of interactions that transpire within an organization while giving all entities involved a voice. When thinking of transformational leadership, words like culture, values, vision, teamwork, development, and service are often used as descriptors (Bass, 2000).

#### *Transformational Leadership in the School Environment*

Since the principal serves as the instructional leader within a school, Sergiovanni (2007) suggests that transformational leadership is the best model for meeting the needs of all stakeholders in the educational setting. Through transformational leadership, Sergiovanni contends there is shared leadership between school administrators, faculty, and staff as all entities are involved in making decisions as it relates to curriculum development and instructional practices. Transformational leadership allows teachers to hone in on what is best for the organization, or in this case, the school. It also encourages teachers to think and operate on their shared beliefs, with a focus on team integration.

Transformational principals are committed to inspiring and empowering teachers and staff to work towards a common vision and mission of the school and to take ownership of the process collaboratively. A principal who adheres to the principles of transformational leadership is not solely centered on getting results; rather, he or she is concentrated on the process of getting the results. All of the stakeholders within the school, through a focus on the values and beliefs of

the school, are provided with an opportunity to determine the best way to obtain the organization's goals. This leadership style allows a school to create a strong school culture and a sense of commitment from faculty and staff.

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) contend that the major influence on what students learn in school after classroom instruction is school leadership. They conclude that there are three elements that describe a successful transformational leader:

- Assisting staff with creating and articulating the goals of the school;
- Building the capacity of the faculty and staff within the school and allowing their areas of strengths to be used in the decision-making process; and
- Willingness to modify the processes in order to make the school culture stronger.

In a school where transformational leadership is utilized, the faculty and staff serve in leadership roles based on their areas of expertise or experience. Elmore (2004) believes this process harvests a school culture of collegiality and collaboration, one truly devoted to making the school a better learning and working environment. When practiced in earnest, transformational leadership has a positive effect on how teachers perceive their own abilities, the abilities of their students, and the belief that the school can be a better school.

As previously mentioned, the process of transformational leadership encourages empowerment through shared decision-making (Elmore, 2004; Jung & Avolio, 2000). In a school environment, empowerment happens when faculty and staff cultivate the confidence in their own abilities to set their own direction through determining which professional development would best help them be able to address and resolve any conflicts and problems that may come up. Teacher empowerment allows teachers to believe in themselves and it gives

them the chance to participate in educational decisions. Empowerment is evident when teachers and staff believe that the power rest within them. From that moment there is an atmosphere of ownership where teachers and staff have a personal investment in doing what needs to be done to make the organization, or in this situation, the school environment, better for them and ultimately better for students (Leithwood & Janzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003). Additionally, there are six dimensions which enable empowerment:

- Teacher status – this refers to professional respect and admiration afforded to teachers by other stakeholders, such as students, parents, fellow teachers, supervisors, and the community as a whole;
- Autonomy – refers to teachers’ views that they control key facets of their work environment, like how to teach content and what resources are best to use. This is sometimes referred to as internal locus of control;
- Teacher impact – refers to the beliefs by teachers that what they do make a difference for students ;
- Opportunities for professional development – refers to teachers being encouraged and afforded the opportunity to participate in continuous professional growth, hereby modeling to students that learning is a lifelong process;
- Efficacy – refers to the degree to which teachers feel and believe their students can learn and that they can learn under their supervision; and
- Shared decision-making – refers to teachers playing a vital part in the decisions that impact student learning (Short & Greer, 1997).

*Laissez-faire Leadership*

“Laissez-faire” is a French term which translates literally to mean “allow to do”. A leader who utilizes a laissez-faire style of leadership usually has a hands-off approach to providing guidance and allows his or her subordinates to manage themselves. Bass (1985) refers to laissez-faire leadership as the lack of presence of leadership within an organization. Bass further contends that a laissez-faire leader avoids intervening in situations when needed. He or she has little or no faith in his or her ability to supervise their subordinates and will intentionally avoid or ignore accepting responsibility or providing support. In addition, laissez-faire leaders are contrastingly different than both previously mentioned transformational and transactional leaders. Laissez-faire leaders do not depend on mutual exchange like transactional leaders nor do they seek to inspire and appeal to the interests of their subordinates like transformational leaders. Due to the lack of shared goals, there is an absence of recognition of performance, good or bad. A laissez-faire leader would not seek to introduce new strategy or organizational direction. Such a leader would offer basic but minimal information and resources with essentially no participation, involvement, or communication within the organization.

Previous research has revealed that there are negative consequences in the absence of leadership (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Jones, 2002; Frischer, 2006). Frischer goes on further to state that the “abdication of leadership is disempowering, effecting leadership behavior of change, relation and production negatively” (p. 3). Laissez-faire leadership can lead to anarchy, chaos, inefficiency, lack of control, and a feeling of uselessness.

However, Barnett, Marsh, and Craven (2005) have concluded that laissez-faire leadership can have a positive impact on organizations, especially within school environments. These researchers investigated 52 secondary schools in Australia, studying the impact of the laissez-

laissez-faire leadership style on seven school learning environment constructs. They were especially interested in trying to determine whether laissez-faire leadership, which is normally perceived as a negative leadership style, negatively impacted the perceptions of teachers. The result of their research revealed that laissez-faire leadership actually had a positive influence on three of the seven school learning constructs – student supportiveness, which refers to the level of interaction between teachers and students; affiliation, which refers to the level of support teachers feel they get from each other; and achievement orientation, which acknowledges the high expectations that teachers have for their students to achieve. As a result of this inquiry, the researchers have suggested that schools can actually benefit from using laissez-faire leadership in situations where there is a need to improve specific areas within the school learning environment.

### *Situational Leadership*

Hersey and Blanchard (1998) define situational leadership as a theory that states there is no single style of leadership. Situational leadership is a combination of leadership styles which create a myriad. In essence, situational leadership represents using whatever tactic is needed at the appropriate time. Northouse (2013) describes situational leadership as the ability of a leader to effectively adapt his or her leadership style to fit the demands of different situations.

Situational leadership is task-oriented and characterized by four approaches: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating.

The directing trait can be identified by one-way communication, where the leader defines the role of the individuals or followers based on specific tasks. There is little to no emphasis placed upon relationships, and this can be an effective leadership style when subordinates lack motivation. In school environments, principals can use this form of situational leadership when

giving directions or instructions to teachers. The directing trait is most effective when dealing with a first-year teacher or a teacher or staff member who needs more attention and supervision (Edutopia, 2011).

The coaching approach also revolves around tasks, but there is a focus on forming relationships. Communication flows two-ways between the leader and followers. As a result, this approach allows greater buy-in from the followers toward the leader's vision or ideals. A school principal can use this approach to reveal their decision-making process and simultaneously direct teachers and staff on tasks. This approach is best matched for teachers that may have two to three years of experience at a school (Chell, 1995).

The supporting characteristic focuses more on relationships and less on tasks. Here, the follower serves in a secondary role, with an emphasis on forging meaningful interactions which allow subordinates to grow and develop. A principal may use this approach when making decisions together with teachers and school staff (Chell, 1995).

The delegating approach involves a focus neither on tasks or relationships. Rather, the leader permits the followers to take on greater responsibilities. The leader serves as a monitor in this approach, gauging the progress being made by the followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). This approach is best suited when teachers and staff are very experienced and highly motivated to do well.

### *Authoritative Leadership*

Authoritative leadership is a style of leadership where the power and decision-making reside with the leader. A review of literature shows that this style of leadership can be described by a variety of names such as autocratic leadership and bureaucratic leadership. The authoritative

leader directs group members in the way things should be done. The authoritative leader does not maintain clear channels of communication between him and her and subordinates. This type of leader will not delegate authority nor permit subordinates to participate in policy making or decision-making (Hoy & Miskel, 1992; Smylie & Jack, 1990). ). Additionally, Sergiovanni (1992) added that authoritative leaders do not trust subordinates.

Authoritative or bureaucratic leaders feel they must closely monitor subordinates to execute their duties because subordinates lack the expertise, knowledge, and trustworthiness to perform their work on their own (Sergiovanni, 1992). Yukl (1994) found that authoritative leaders tend to have the following five characteristics: they do not consult with members of the organization in the decision-making process; the leaders set all the policies; the leaders predetermine the methods of work; they determine the duties of followers; and the leaders specify technical and performance evaluation standards.

In a school environment, an authoritative or bureaucratic principal may not have the same goals or interests as teachers. Two notable practitioners of authoritative leadership in education are Joe Clark and Michelle Rhee. In 1982, Joe Clark became principal of Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey. Eastside High had a student population of 3200, mostly black and Hispanic. Eastside High was known for low test scores, high drop-out rate, and rampant school violence. As principal, Joe Clark reportedly suspended 300 students in a single day. He was also known for removing teachers and staff who did not follow his vision. Joe Clark once said, “In this building, everything emanates and ultimates from me. Nothing happens without me” (Simpson, 1988, p. 6). Within two years, Eastside High was named a Model School.

Michelle Rhee was named chancellor of Washington D.C.'s school district's 123 schools in June 2007. Within a year, Rhee dismissed 270 students, 36 principals, 100 central office staff, and closed 21 schools. Many people praised Rhee for having the courage and determination to make a change in the DC Public Schools, but others pointed out that her dictatorial, top-down models of management did not work.

### **Doctoral Research on Early College High Schools**

In reviewing the research literature on ECHS, I have analyzed other doctoral work done on the same topic. Of note, I discovered that there has been a number of doctoral research studies conducted on ECHS in the College of Education at my university. One study, "Student Engagement in the Early College High School", conducted by Michael Roberts (2007), detailed the levels of student engagement that existed in a typical ECHS. This case study involved the portrayal of several students who were enrolled at a local ECHS. Through an analysis of documents, interviews of students, teachers, and administrators, and direct observation, Roberts concluded that student engagement at ECHS was higher than student engagement in traditional high school settings. Roberts' (2007) research lends credence to the ideals that the principles of ECHSI are successful in helping students to prepare for post-secondary opportunities (p. 92).

Another study done in the College of Education at my university was by Thomas Warren, "Early College High School Philosophy and Policy: How Q-Methodology Reveals Form, Process, and Leadership" (2012). Through a two phase research design, Warren described the ECHS model and what philosophy and policy molded the form, process, and leadership of three local ECHS (2012, p. 7). In doing his research, Warren had three research sub-questions to support his goal. One of the three sub-questions sought to identify ECHS leadership. Warren's

research revealed that ECHS administrators believed that “developing and maintaining positive relationships with staff and students as a high priority in their leadership practice” (2012, p. 258). In addition, ECHS administrators interviewed in this research felt that the ECHS model allowed them to interact with teachers and students in a way that administrators in traditional high school settings could not – more frequent contact and a shared belief of the philosophy, mission, and policy of the ECHS model.

### **Conclusion**

In considering the review of the literature, there was significant research on the formation and implementation of the Early College High School model. Additionally, there was considerable research on the dominant leadership styles – transactional, transformational, laissez-faire, situational, and authoritative. However, the review of literature revealed a lack of research on principal leadership styles used in operating Early College High Schools and more specifically, what leadership style(s) principals of ECHSs used and what leadership styles teachers at ECHSs perceive their principals use. Thus, the novelty of the proposed research examining the leadership styles of Early College High Schools’ principals is more relevant as more school districts and policymakers consider using ECHSs as a means to meet the educational needs of students.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to identify the leadership styles used by two principals in Early College High Schools (ECHS) in North Carolina and how the teachers in these respective ECHSs perceive the leadership styles of their principals. This study was not an analysis of all of the leadership styles used by ECHS principals. However, it was the goal of this study to establish whether transactional, transformational or laissez-faire leadership qualities, three of the more dominant leadership styles used by school principals, play a vital role in the course of ECHS principals operating their schools.

As previously mentioned in chapter one and chapter two, there has been a lot of attention on the state of public education and school reform. Federal mandates and initiatives, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top, and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, highlight the renewed interest in improving the American educational system (Hess & Boser, 2009). These moves by the federal government, in conjunction with individual state educational reforms, have led to school boards and school leaders seeking new ways to educate children (Hess & Boser, 2009). It has been said that “education innovation is not a fad, but a prerequisite for deep, systematic change, the kind of change that is necessary and long overdue” (Hess & Boser, 2009, p. 8).

### *Research Questions*

Within the context of this study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What are the leadership styles used by two principals of Early College High Schools in North Carolina?
2. How do the teachers and staff of the two Early College High Schools in North Carolina perceive the leadership styles of their schools’ principals?

This chapter provided a general overview of the qualitative research design that was used in this study. A brief discussion of the data collection methods as well as a description of the validity of the study is included in this chapter. In addition, a discussion of my personal subjectivity as the sole researcher is included.

### **Design of the Study**

This study used an interpretive qualitative design to identify the dominant leadership styles of two ECHS principals from the viewpoint of the two ECHS principals and teachers at their respective schools (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2002). By using a qualitative research design, this researcher was better able to examine and understand information that is difficult to quantify while also gaining an appreciation for phenomena about which little is known. This research method was suitable for this study because the strategy was inductive in nature, yet the outcome was descriptive. It is my hope that these research questions provided a snapshot of principals' leadership styles in two selected Early College High Schools through rich, descriptive writings in a natural setting as done by the researcher (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2002).

Data was collected through the selected principals' interviews, focus groups of teachers at the identified ECHSs, and analysis of each school's website for demographic information, which hopefully identified trends and patterns that are consistent across the data (Merriam, 2002). This data was used to define the leadership styles used by these two principals of ECHSs as well as the impact of their leadership styles on ECHS's adherence to the Core Principles of the Early College High School Initiative.

#### *Site Selection*

The site and participants was identified as a result of a review of the list of Early College High Schools in North Carolina as determined by the North Carolina New Schools Project ([www.ncnewschools.org](http://www.ncnewschools.org)). From this list, Early College High Schools' websites were reviewed to identify school demographics to determine if schools are adhering to the Early College Core Principles identified in chapter 2, with an emphasis on whether ECHSs are serving underrepresented students, students of racial minority groups, and limited English proficient students. Schools that are true to at least five of the six Core Principles were viewed by the researcher as "traditionally defined ECHS" and those who follow four or less of the Core Principles were viewed as "nontraditionally defined ECHS".

### *Sampling*

Purposeful sampling has been determined to be the most effective way to gather participants since it seeks to study information-rich cases in depth. Merriam (2002) stated that "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 6). In addition, Merriam (2002) conceded that purposeful sampling produces a lot of valuable information while providing common themes and variations within the context of the study. Data was collected through the use of structured interviews with open-ended questions guiding the dialogue.

### **Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2005) and Merriam (2002), qualitative research generally used at least one of three major data collection methods: interviews, observations, and a review of documents and artifacts. For this research, I used both interviews and reviews of documents for

each of the schools as found on their respective websites. I used interviews and focus groups as a means to collect data in ECHS schools because the uniqueness of these schools can provide rich information that is difficult to quantify.

After the Early College High Schools have been identified, I selected two Early College High Schools, one “traditionally defined” and one “nontraditionally defined”. The two ECHS schools were contacted to determine if they are interested in participating in the study. A letter (see Appendix C) was sent to the two principals to explain the purpose of my study.

Once the principals of the respective schools had agreed to participate, a date for a face-to-face interview was set. Prior to the actual interview, the researcher emailed the principal a copy of the questions that will be asked in the interview (see Appendix A). Creswell (2005) concluded that in-depth interviewing is a dialogue with a specific purpose. These interviews focused on how the two ECHS principals perceive their leadership styles and how their respective skills, training, and beliefs impact their ability to be effective school leaders as expressed in the words of the interviewees.

Each of these interviews was conducted using a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. The questions used were asked at both principal interviews, to ensure consistency. The interviews lasted about 45 to 60 minutes in length. The interviews were recorded with an audio digital device and the researcher also took notes. The interviews were transcribed on a computer and emailed to the respective principals for their review and feedback. The principal interview questions are provided in Appendix A. After the transcripts are typed, I identified codes through open coding (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 2002) and then assigned code words or phrases to be able to categorize the information into relevant categories.

I also collected documents from each of the Early College High Schools' websites near the time of the interviews with the principal. Documents collected included demographics on student population; activities in and around the schools; student achievement data, such as graduation rate, proficiency on assessments, etc.; and information from the principal to the students, faculty, and parents. Also, information from the latest North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) was analyzed. The NCTWCS is a statewide survey given every two years to licensed school based educators. The survey seeks to identify whether teachers feel that they have the supports to effectively teach in the classrooms of North Carolina. The results are often used as part of evaluation instruments in North Carolina.

I also conducted focus groups with licensed staff, including teachers and guidance counselors, at each respective school within a week of the principal interview. The goal of each focus group was to have at least 51% of the licensed staff to participate, as ECHSs tend to have 7 to 10 licensed staff. With the principal's permission, I posted a notice at the respective school inviting licensed staff to participate in a focus group. Refreshments were provided to teachers to participate. It was important that a majority of the licensed staff participate in order to collect data that is reflective of the leadership practices of the principal. Each focus group was asked the same questions and responses were recorded (see Appendix B). Each focus group lasted about 45 to 60 minutes in length. Each participant in the focus group was given the same opportunity to respond to each question, recognizing that some questions may not have a response from each participant. This was due to the reluctance of participants to respond to the questions based on their particular interpretation of the questions.

Additional information from each of the respective high school's websites was used to triangulate the data for the research project. I looked at student demographic data, student achievement data, and types of activities and resources available to students in each of the respective ECHS schools, as well as evidence of the ways the principals at the respective ECHS schools communicated with staff, students, and stakeholders, such principal newsletters, blogs, and newsfeeds. Also, all schools in North Carolina have a School Improvement Plan (SIP). SIPs are school based plans that are based on a school's data which highlight areas of strength and identify areas of weaknesses with detailed plans of how the school will address those areas. An analysis of each school's SIP was conducted to identify the specific goals of each respective school.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

According to Merriam (2002), a true qualitative study is considered accurate when the procedures used are obvious and appropriate for the study. The validity and reliability of a qualitative study is dependent on the ability and effort of the researcher (Patton, 2001). Further, Patton (2001) notes that the concepts of reliability and validity are integral components of any qualitative research design as these two concepts get to the heart of the study – analyzing results and judging the quality of the study. Reliability is a result of the validity of the study. Validity and reliability allowed me to determine if the findings of my research have merit and are accurate representations of the phenomenon I was studying

#### *Triangulation*

Triangulation usually involves the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and interviews, as the major data collection strategies. Patton (2001) promotes the use of

triangulation by noting that “triangulation strengthens a study (p. 247). Patton (2001) also advocates that incorporating various methods, like interviews and recordings, which were used in this research – make this study more valid and reliable. Triangulation was used to make comparisons between the interviews of the two ECHS principals and the results of the focus groups to collect and validate the findings in this research. The use of data from the respective ECHS schools’ websites further substantiated the data from the principals’ interviews and focus group discussions.

### *Researcher Subjectivity*

As principal of a Middle College High School currently and with many years of experience as a teacher and an administrator in schools that traditionally serve students who belong to groups underrepresented in post-secondary institutions, I bring to this research a certain level of bias. Merriam (2002) concluded that assumptions are a source of bias. As a result of my experiences, I have realized that in my current position, my previous experiences have given me a foundation for operating in a nontraditional education environment like Middle College, but my experiences and formal administrator training did not give me all of the necessary training required to be the most effective principal of Middle College. However, it has been a process of true trials and errors and modifying experiences I had in traditional educational settings that have allowed me to succeed in a Middle College environment. In addition, I have sought to identify principals of other successful Middle College High Schools and establish professional relationships with them in order to share and gather strategies that would lead to academic success for Middle College students.

It was in researching successful Middle College High Schools in North Carolina that I began to see many examples of successful Early College High Schools in North Carolina. Further inquiry led me to explore how Early College and Middle College High Schools were similar and how they were different. This inquiry also revealed examples of Early College High Schools that were experiencing high levels of academic success and ECHS schools that were struggling. Possible variations, especially in leadership styles, between ECHS schools provided a primary focus for this study.

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the design, sampling and data collection that were used in this study as well as discussed the validity, reliability, and my own subjectivity in relation to this study. Qualitative methodology (Merriam, 2002) was used to collect data for this research, including interviews of the two principals of ECHS schools and focus groups at the respective schools. An evaluation of the ECHS schools' websites was used to determine the accuracy of the interview data collected and to triangulate the data to improve the validity of the study. A system of coding (Creswell, 2005) was used to identify prevailing patterns and themes from the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

Describing the leadership styles of principals in Early College High Schools (ECHS) in North Carolina was the focus of this qualitative study. Two questions guided the research:

1. What are the leadership styles used by two principals of Early College High Schools in North Carolina?
2. How do teachers and staff in two Early College High Schools in North Carolina perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?

This chapter looks at two Early College High Schools (ECHS) in North Carolina. For each respective ECHS, a historical overview will introduce the ECHS, including a description of each school's demographics and analysis of school data. Following the overview of each ECHS, I will discuss the findings at it relates to the two research questions by sharing data gathered from the interview with each respective ECHS principal, followed by the data from the focus group of the respective ECHS. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the ECHS, school systems, and principals, and identifiers are used to protect the identities of focus group participants.

#### **Early College of Tree**

Early College of Tree\* is a public high school, grades 9-12, located on a community college campus in the Triad-Piedmont region of North Carolina. Early College of Tree (ECT) was started in 2008 as a New Schools Project school and is a joint collaboration between Tree County Public Schools (TCPS) and Tree County Community College (TCCC) and is the only ECHS in this urban district. According to the school's website, for the 2015-2016 school year,

ECT's student body is comprised of 12% Asian, 21% Black/African-American, 16% Hispanic, 45% Caucasian, and 6% others; 26% of students enrolled at ECT qualify for free or reduced lunch and 35% of students represent first generation college students.

At ECT, students take high school and college courses simultaneously. All high school courses are taught by certified public school teachers on an honors level on a 4X4 block schedule, where students can take up to 4 high school courses for 90 minutes each day for 90 days. Students take high school courses as needed to meet the graduation requirements for a TCPS diploma, which is 22 high school credits. Students can take college courses through Tree County Community College (TCCC) that count towards meeting both high school diploma requirements and college credits. All college courses are taught by TCCC faculty. Students enrolled at ECT start taking college courses in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and by their senior year have earned enough college credits to earn an Associate's degree, either an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science, concurrently.

ECT has immediately shown great success in graduating students from high school career and college ready. In 2012, ECT's inaugural graduation class, 98% of students graduated with a high school diploma in 4 years. ECT has had a 100% graduation rate for each 4-year cohort that year (2013, 2014, and 2015).

### **Mrs. Forest, ECT principal**

Mrs. Forest proudly serves as principal of the Early College of Tree. A white female in her early 40s, Mrs. Forest received her undergraduate degree in Health and Physical Education from High Point University and immediately began teaching in Tree County Public Schools

(TCPS), where she has spent the last 19.5 years as an educator. She earned her Master's in Educational Administration and Supervision from Appalachian State University through a satellite program at Winston-Salem State University.

Mrs. Forest became an assistant principal in August, 2003 at one of the magnet middle schools in TCPS. While serving as an assistant principal, she participated in the district's Leadership Academy for Administrators and worked closely with the principal of the middle school at that time, who she considers a mentor. In addition, Mrs. Forest had an opportunity to conduct a one-on-one action research project with an educational researcher at East Carolina University. She credited that experience with giving her the "refinement" to be a principal. During our interview, Mrs. Forest spoke about how her mentor taught her to "think before you speak" and he privileged her with the opportunity to prepare and work with budgets and finances.

In March, 2008, Mrs. Forest was named principal of ECT. As the founding principal of ECT, she has had the daunting task of starting the school from scratch, from hiring personnel, establishing school protocol and schedule, and manipulating New Schools Project budget and TCPS budget.

When asked whether she felt that her principal and administrator preparation and training prepared her to be principal of ECT, Mrs. Forest immediately responded "not very well". She went on to state the principal preparation program gives you the theory of what should happen as a principal, not the on the job specifics, or as she stated, "not day to day guidance". Mrs. Forest further stated that principal preparation training gives you the big picture view of what you

couldn't see in the classroom as a teacher – “when you see a situation as a teacher, you only see a little window; as an administrator, you get a better picture”.

### *Leadership Style*

Mrs. Forest really struggled when I asked her to define her leadership style. As we met in her principal's office at her school, she actually began to use the Google search engine on her work computer to look up leadership styles. When she finally spoke, Mrs. Forest stated that leadership is “situational of course”. She further stated that depending on what is going on, she uses different approaches. Overall, Mrs. Forest described her leadership style as straightforward, not top down, and inclusive. She elaborated that she sets expectations and that she expects her teachers and staff to do their job. Mrs. Forest went even further stating “I am not an English teacher or math teacher and I'm not an expert in English or math, but I will go into classrooms and make sure the teacher is teaching”. In continuing to define her leadership style, Mrs. Forest shared that she doesn't believe in holding an individual accountable, but rather in collective accountability where everyone is responsible for each other. She identified herself as innovative and believes communication is a two-way street.

Mrs. Forest felt confidently that her teachers and staff would describe her leadership style in the same way that she does. She felt they would also say that she lets them do their job and only steps in when needed. She stated that teachers would say also she is a “hands-off” leader – not in a lazy way though, but let them do their own thing. Mrs. Forest said that teachers would feel included in the decision-making that occurred at the school, but they too would acknowledge that she will make an independent decision when needed.

Mrs. Forest identified a former Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools as the leader that she most admired. She said she chose him because he always told her “like it is”. She continued, “He never sugarcoated anything-always straightforward”. She respected the fact that the former assistant superintendent would acknowledge her when she was doing well and would scold her when she did something wrong. She truly appreciated that when she was in his presence, he gave her his full attention and focus, and she did not feel rushed. She eloquently stated that “when you were with him, you were with him, and he was with you”.

Mrs. Forest recognized that her concern in making decisions for her school stemmed mainly on how the decision would affect her students and the parents and teachers involved. She is also cognizant of who has the knowledge to make the decisions--if staff and teachers can make the decision, she will allow them to do so; if not, she will not hesitate to make the decision herself. She used the master schedule as an illustration of her point. On Fridays at ECT, there are no isolated college classes for students. As a group, all the teachers developed a schedule so that each teacher would meet with students and provide academic support in each of their content areas. Mrs. Forest allowed the teachers to decide on the schedule and assign students to teachers. She said her role was simply to look for injustices in groupings and to ensure that each teacher met regularly with students in the spirit of equity. She would allow teachers to make adjustments to the schedule as needed. Another example she provided dealt with the math student teacher at her school. After observing his classroom, she noticed he was experiencing difficulty with his instructional presentation and with inconsistent lesson plans. So, as the instructional leader, she initiated some changes, which included only allowing the student teacher to teach two days a

week after he has met with her to review lesson plans. Her words – “I’d rather have 20 prepared students than 1 prepared student teacher”.

### *Challenges and Obstacles*

When asked if she had encountered any challenges as ECHS principal, Mrs. Forest referred to the fact that she felt because ECHS is so different, it was like being on an island. As the only ECHS in the school district and having the task of creating and starting the ECHS, Mrs. Forest stated “no one in Central Office knows how to deal with me-understand that I am funded differently”. She further expressed that it often difficult navigating between two distinct institutions like TCPS and TCCC. To overcome this challenge, Mrs. Forest stated she had to “bridge the culture” between the two institutions. She became a part of the TCCC community by getting to know people, volunteering to serve on committees around the community college campus such as hiring committees and advisory boards, and aligning ECT to participate in some of the same activities that TCCC did, like the March of Dimes campaign and student festivals. Her goal was “instead of being that high school on the community college campus, I became a part of the campus”. She invites college instructors to a coffee chat so that she can get to know them and they in part can learn more about ECHS and ECT in particular.

In terms of dealing with the public school system, she acknowledged that not being a traditional high school has caused her to assume many different responsibilities that would normally be assigned to specific people. In order to better understand certain processes and

procedures and to make others aware of the explicit needs of ECHS, Mrs. Forest made appointments with different key personnel at TCPS Central Office, such as the Director of Accountability, Internal Auditor, Director of Finance, Child Nutrition Director, and Director of Transportation, to name a few. Since she in a sense created ECT, Mrs. Forest started a network of people who she could go to in order to get things done. She stated “I made friends with people – those relationships has helped (me) over the years”.

In regards to staying true to core principles of ECHS, Mrs. Forest conceded that there are challenges. One challenge is the environment of the school itself. Being one of 16 high schools in the TCPS school district and being in a system of choice, where parents can choose to send their students to a school other than their residential zone school, recruitment is difficult. Certain high schools have established reputations and are perceived to be “good schools” with a storied history. Students and parents may choose to attend one of the more established high schools than ECT.

Another challenge to meeting the core principles of ECHS also has to do with the location of ECT. Being that Tree County is considered an urban district and with the location of a major university and research hospital nearby, applications to ECT tend to come more often from parents and students who may not be first-generation college students or who may not necessarily be socioeconomically disadvantaged but who want to take advantage of the college courses offered at ECT. Currently, ECT’s student population represents about 35% first-generation college students, with the mandate from the New Schools Project and the state is the goal should be about 90% first-generation college students. Recently, New Schools has softened

their goal to 75%, according to Mrs. Forest. This is uncommon for most ECHS schools who tend to focus on recruiting and serving this population.

Adding to the challenge of staying true to the core principles of ECHS is the presence of a separate Middle College on the same community college as ECT, according to the principal. People often confuse the two programs. The Middle College High School (MCHS) has been in existence a lot longer than ECHS and “people just don’t know the difference” in the schools--be it on the community college campus, at TCPS Central Office, and in the community.

Additionally, being on the community college campus itself posed a challenge. Mrs. Forest voiced concerns that some community college instructors have made it very clear they do not want to teach high school students and often are not open to working with them. Students enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades are taught in isolated college courses where the college instructors come to the ECHS and teach the high school students in self-contained classrooms. This scenario works well, according to Mrs. Forest. However, the issues arise when 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders enroll in traditional community college courses and are dispersed across campus.

Lastly, Mrs. Forest considers the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between TCCC and TCPS to be a challenge. The MOU serves as a guide to how ECHS operates and details what entity will provide which services and levels of support to ECHS. It includes such items as who pays salaries and who provides operational support, facilities, and textbooks, to name a few. In Mrs. Forest’s opinion, the MOU is too specific. “At the time it was created”, Mrs. Forest said, “I had little experience of what I was getting into and did not know all of the things to consider”. To illustrate her point, she alludes to the fact that Early College of Tree is the most aggressive

ECHS program in the state--students at this ECHS complete two years' worth of college in four years instead of five years, like all the other ECHS in the state of North Carolina. At the time of the MOU creation, this sounded like a novel idea. However, in reflection, Mrs. Forest conveyed that she would have left the program a five-year program in the interest of helping her students. "Not knowing the game-not being able to read when somebody is helping themselves or helping the school-is tough call".

In considering our conversation, Mrs. Forest concluded that being a ECHS principal does require a different style of leadership skills. In her words, "a (ECHS) principal has to see the big and small picture". In a sense, an ECHS principal is vulnerable and has to be open to doing and being a lot more than a traditional high school principal. Being in a ECHS, the school is normally not staffed like a traditional high school, which means the ECHS principal is often left with the task of picking up additional responsibilities and being a "jack of all trades", according to Mrs. Forest. Most importantly, she said, "you learn what fight to fight". By this, Mrs. Forest suggests that no one can do it all, so you learn quickly what is most important. For her, it is all about what is in the best interests of her students.

### **ECT Staff**

Eleven of twelve members of the faculty and staff of ECT participated in the focus group, ten teachers, one student teacher, and one support staff; 7 of the 11 participants were white females, 2 were white males, 1 African-American male, and 1 African-American female. All of the faculty and staff, except for the student teacher, had been in education more than 5 years, with the majority of the staff having experiences at other schools besides ECT. Of the group, 8

have worked in a comprehensive traditional high school setting, ranging from 2 years to 34 years. By show of hands, eight of the ECT staff and faculty say they chose to work at ECT, whereby they saw the job posting, applied and interviewed for the position, and were offered the job. One teacher said she was placed at ECT through a surplus process – her teacher position was eliminated at her previous high school due to an allotment change. Since she was under contract, the district placed her at ECT.

|            |                         | ECT   | FACULTY AND STAFF |               |              |                |
|------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
|            | SEX                     | RACE  | TOTAL YRS IN ED   | # YRS IN DIST | # YRS AT ECT | ROLE           |
| Ms. Pink   | F                       | WHITE | 10                | 7             | 6            | Social Studies |
| Mr. Black  | CHOSE NOT TO PARTICPATE |       |                   |               |              |                |
| Mr. White  | M                       | WHITE | 6                 | 6             | 6            | Math           |
| Ms. Yellow | F                       | WHITE | 10                | 6.5           | 6.5          | English        |
| Ms. Green  | F                       | WHITE | 8                 | 8             | 5            | Math           |
| Ms. Orange | F                       | WHITE | 6                 | 2             | 2            | Math           |
| Mr. Red    | M                       | BLACK | 35                | 11            | 5            | English        |
| Ms. Silver | F                       | WHITE | 13                | 8             | 8            | Science        |
| Ms. Gray   | F                       | WHITE | 16                | 16            | 4            | Science        |
| Ms. Blue   | F                       | WHITE | 34                | 34            | 1            | Social Studies |
| Mr. Purple | M                       | WHITE | <1                | <1            | <1           | Math intern    |
| Ms.        | F                       | BLACK | 18                | 12            | 3            | Support        |

|          |  |  |  |  |  |       |
|----------|--|--|--|--|--|-------|
| Lavender |  |  |  |  |  | staff |
|----------|--|--|--|--|--|-------|

Table 2 – ECT Faculty/Staff demographics

When asked to identify the core principles of ECHS, everyone in the room responded “college and career ready”. Other responses varied from the group, including “focus on personal relationships”, “small groups instruction”, “differentiation”, “partnerships between the college and high school”, and “agreement/MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the college”.

### *Principal Leadership*

The focus group at ECT was asked to categorize leadership characteristics they desired in an ECHS principal. The group was initially quiet when asked this question; however, soon responses began. One staff member stated “presence”, while another said “teacher support”. Other replies included having a vision for the school; not a micromanager; approachable; caring and honest; someone with a good relationship with staff and students; and fair.

Interestingly, when asked to describe Mrs. Forest’s leadership styles, there was a lot of consensus among the group. Ms. Green stated “she was a micromanager in the past, but now she is more free...she is more trusting with her babies. She has learned confidence”. After Ms. Green finished her statement, there were lots of heading nodding and echoes of “Yes” could be heard around the table. Mr. Red stated that their principal was “personable”. Mr. White added that Mrs. Forest was “student focused, parent relation focused, and really accessible”. Ms. Yellow chimed in with “our principal serves as a buffer for a lot of things, shielding us from stuff like central office and parents. She is practical”.

There were mixed responses to the question of describing the leadership styles of any previous principal for which they had previously worked. Ms. Silver immediately responded “dictator”, while Ms. Orange enthusiastically exclaimed “sociopath”. Ms. Green added “my old principal was easily influenced by older teachers in the school” and Ms. Orange countered with “well, my old principal got rid of veteran teachers”. Other responses included:

- Preferential treatment (Ms. Silver)
- A ladder climber (Ms. Gray)
- Very personable-actually came in to teach a class (Ms. Green)
- Very supportive with parents and students (Ms. Silver)
- Super supportive, but had hard time with disciplining students (Ms. Orange)
- Put together a strong team (Ms. Blue)
- He trusted students more than teachers (Ms. Green)
- Rude (Ms. Gray).

A unanimous “yes” was the response received when the group at ECT was asked if they thought the principal of ECHS required a different style of leadership than the principal of a comprehensive high school. Ms. Pink added that “balancing the schedule between high and college is a hard job”, in reference to the ECHS principal having to make a high school master schedule work in concert with the master schedule of the community college. According to Ms. Orange, “handling finances is hard--having to work between the grants (received from New Schools Project) and school funds. She has to purchase college textbooks and work with the college”. Ms. Blue stated that at an ECHS, “you are vested with every teacher, more time for conferences, and observations” because of the smallness of the school. Ms. Silver stated “you

have lots more responsibility” with Ms. Pink agreeing, stating “you have to do so much more-- recruitment, marketing, advertising”. Another staff sounded that the principal at ECHS has “to sell the school-and selling the school is tough job” (Ms. Gray). Ms. Pink also added that it can be challenging dealing with and communicating with first-generation college students. Mr. White concluded that an ECHS principal has to be a problem solver, acknowledging that the solutions to traditional issues and problems that occur in a regular high school don’t always apply to ECHS. Mr. White gave an example that if ECHS is short on money for college textbooks, finding money and resources to purchase textbooks is often complex but necessary. Ms. Green stated that “manipulating everyday situations in this setting is different”.

### **Early College of Bloom State University**

The Early College of Bloom State University (ECBSU) is a public high school offering grades 9-13 curriculum on a 4-year university campus in the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina. ECBSU was founded as a joint collaboration between Powell County Schools (PCS) and Bloom State University (BSU).

In 2006, ECBSU applied for, and received, a grant from the New Schools Project to become a “Learn and Earn” School. The goal of the “Learn and Earn” School is to establish Early College High Schools (ECHS) across the state of North Carolina on campuses of higher education. “Learn and Earn” schools share the following characteristics:

- They have small enrollment, with a maximum of 400 students;
- They have their own school number from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which gives them the same autonomy as other schools in the district;

- They offer a grade 9-13 curriculum that guarantees students who successfully complete the program a high school diploma and either two years of college credits or an Associate's degree at no cost;
- They focus on enrolling students: (1) who are willing to accelerate their high school studies and start taking college courses while still in high school; (2) who prefer a small school environment; (3) who may be at risk of not succeeding in a large high school; and (4) who are under-represented in the higher education college population (i.e., first-generation, lower socioeconomic status).

Students simultaneously take high school and college classes, with high school classes taught by certified high school teachers and college courses taught on campus by college instructors. Learn and Earn schools receive a five-year grant, which is renewable, that provides funding for three full-time positions and funding for professional development for high school teachers and administrators.

ECBSU is truly a unique high school in that it is a single gender high school encompassed of all males and was the first single gender public high school in North Carolina. The school's demographics are comprised of 96% African-American/Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Caucasian; 61% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch. ECBSU is one of about nine ECHS schools among the 34 high schools in this urban district.

**Mr. Bark, ECBSU principal**

Mr. Bark, a black male in his forties, is the second principal of ECBSU. Ironically, he received his undergraduate degree and master's degree in information technology on the same

campus that ECBSU is located. However, after working some other jobs, he was hired as a substitute, then as an in-school suspension assistant and as he puts it, “caught the bug”.

Encouraged by a principal for whom he worked, he returned to school and received his Master’s in Educational Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He worked as an administrator the last 10 of the 13 years he has been in education. He worked as an assistant principal in various schools in several districts and was a high school assistant principal and principal of a traditional middle school in this district for three years before being named principal of ECBSU three years ago.

### *Principal Preparation*

When asked whether he thought his principal and administrator preparation and training had prepared him to be principal of ECBSU, Mr. Bark immediately shook his head from side to side. “There were a lot of things not covered...lots of aspects not covered”. He stated further he did not learn how to navigate the political arena – “the bureaucracy and red tape” as he called it. According to Mr. Bark, he really could have used more guidance on dealing with school finance. As an example, Mr. Bark shared that a significant amount of money had been donated to the university (BSU) specifically for the Early College of BSU. So the decision was made to utilize the funds to take the students on college tours to visit colleges along the Eastern seaboard. Many questions came with this decision – do I need the school system’s permission even though it is not the school system’s money? Who assumes liability – the school system or liability? Under whose name do you travel?

Mr. Bark acknowledged that he was not initially prepared to handle some things when he became principal of Early College of BSU, even after the two-day new principal training he received from the New Schools Project network. . He stated “you have to build as you go along”. He contended that he has to do lots of solicitation and marketing to promote the school and to get enrollment projections. At such a unique school, according to Mr. Bark, “you have to create your own image- and that is difficult when you don’t have the training”.

### *Leadership Style defined*

Mr. Bark did not hesitate to define his leadership style. “Definitive and inclusive” he said boastfully, “things are black and white with me”. However, he added that he often tries to include the input of other people when necessary. As an example, Mr. Bark cited his School Improvement Team (SIT) team. The SIT team is composed of all staff at the school and a parent representing each grade level. As a team, the SIT team is responsible for developing and implementing the School Improvement Plan for the school. “That’s all fine and good”, Mr. Bark said, “but as principal, I will say this is the direction we are going and provide a vision”.

Mr. Bark continued, “As a leader, I like to develop leaders”. He shared that he tells his faculty and staff often that they have earned degrees and has earned degrees, so that should represent their capacity to do what need to be done. As teachers, they should be leaders in their roles just as he is expected to be a leader in his role. However, he pointed out, it does not always work that way. He shared with me an example where there was a small fire in one of the classrooms in the school. The teacher’s response to this situation was to call the office for assistance rather than pull the fire alarm. According to Mr. Bark, the teacher should have the

capacity to make a judgment call and pull the fire alarm without his assistance or the assistance of anyone else. Mr. Bark simply stated “I want a building full of leaders.”

When asked to describe how his staff would describe his leadership style, Mr. Bark said “blunt, no gray area”. But, he added, they would say he is free-spirited as well. “I encourage them to be creative and I encourage them to be a leader in their classrooms” he said. As an example, he referenced the other day when the physical science teacher took his class out onto the university track during the class period. Mr. Bark continued, “It was a nice day, nice weather- students did activities with velocity and neat things with running and challenging each other. Students were engaged--I encourage these types of activities”.

As another example, Mr. Bark mentioned that in observance of Black History Month and February 1 sit-in, he suspended all school’s operations for that day and all the students and staff participated in the university’s activities, from breakfast, city march, and speakers’ forums. He stated that he does “what is beneficial to kids” and believe his staff would agree with him. He also says that they would say he is fair and flexible when it comes to them as well. If school is closed due to inclement weather, Mr. Bark will allow teachers to work from home in lieu of using leave time.

I asked Mr. Bark to identify any leader he admired and surprisingly, he identified two former principals that he worked for – Ms. Queen and Mr. Ridgeway. Mr. Bark stated that both were people persons who cared about students and teachers. He also talked about how both were unwavering when it came to academics. He noted both individuals were very poised and communicated well, adding that Ms. Queen could tell you to “go to hell” so nicely. They took

measures to ensure to support people around them. In describing the two he admired, he stated, “they showed me I can be humanistic”. He also said that he learned from them that sometimes the rules are meant to be broken as long as things are good and beneficial to kids. “Nobody will say anything as long as the outcome is good...people will actually forget about the rules if it works,” he concluded.

Mr. Bark’s tone became more serious when asked to pinpoint his motivations in leading his school. “Student belonging” he quipped. He works hard to make sure no student feel like he or she was not part of the school. He acknowledged that this motivation stemmed from a personal experience when he attended school and that his goal was to make sure each student had emotional support. He talked about a situation that happened the day before the interview. One of his students is really shy and this is his second year at the school. This student, who seldom says anything, stopped him in the hallway and wanted to talk to Mr. Bark after school. Astonished, Mr. Bark agreed to meet with the young man and the young man talked more than he has known him to talk over the last two years. It caused Mr. Bark to be late to a session with the superintendent but according to Mr. Bark, it was about the student’s needs first. Mr. Bark stated, “I make decisions that have a greater impact than just education – I concentrate on the whole person”.

### *Challenges and Obstacles*

When asked to isolate challenges that he had encountered as ECHS principal, Mr. Bark referenced the physical building and facility used by the school. Initially, to accommodate the needs of the ECHS, high school classrooms were dispersed in numerous buildings across the

university campus. In that type of environment, it was difficult to create and maintain a school culture and to monitor expectations, according to Mr. Bark. “It was not feasible--it didn’t make sense”, he added. However, after much deliberation, negotiation, and renovation, an unused building was designated as the new home of the ECHS. This building allowed all of ECBSU to be housed in one location. He noted that since the move, the university campus has embraced the ECHS and they now feel a part of the university campus. More importantly, it has given students a sense of belonging.

According to Mr. Bark, ECBSU is doing a good job addressing the core principles of ECHS, namely serving students under-represented in postsecondary education. Almost two-thirds of Early College of Bloom students are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, 98% of students are classified as racial minorities, and 60% will be first-generation college students. However, he admitted it is difficult to maintain the core principles without establishing a base. It is often difficult to secure accurate data. Data is usually obtained in interviews with students and parents and it is sometimes difficult to ask sensitive questions without seeming discriminatory, according Mr. Bark. “We look for at-risk factors, like history of bullying, single-parent homes” he stated. In addition, having other schools in the districts, and being one of many ECHS, Mr. Bark said that ECBSU had a perception of being a “dumping ground” for students, especially African-American young males, who got in fights or who did not do what they needed to do at their residential schools. “They already are struggling”, Mr. Bark said, “and now you want to send them on a college campus where there are more distractions, more opportunities to engage in mishaps”.

In reflecting on our conversation, Mr. Bark definitely agreed that an ECHS principal required a different style of leadership. He felt that the business aspect of running an ECHS is often overlooked. He stressed that in a traditional high school, a principal could run it as he or she would run a large business and do a great job. However, he countered that that same approach at an ECHS would lead to failure. An ECHS principal has to be personable be willing to work in small environments, and work with students and staff. This cannot be achieved without people skills, according Mr. Bark. In addition, because of the uniqueness of ECHS, the principal could be out of the realm of the spotlight in a school district. “As long as you are not in the hot seat, no one will bother you. So you have to make judgments based on what you know”, concluded Mr. Bark, alluding to the fact that there are people at central office and even supervisors who may not understand what a principal does at ECHS. It is during those times that the ECHS principal is left to make decisions that are the best interests of the school.

### **ECBSU Staff**

Five of the ten faculty members participated in the focus group. The school was in the middle of the recruiting process and various faculty members were involved with that process. The focus group represented the diverse population of the faculty – 2 African-American females, 1 African-American male, 1 white female, and 1 white male. The group assembled had varied years in education, ranging from three to fourteen years. This entire group had a minimum of two years within this district. Interestingly, only two members of this group have ever taught in a traditional comprehensive high school setting, with one other member having taught in a middle school setting prior to teaching at ECB. When asked how many chose to work at ECB, all

participants raised their hands to acknowledge that they saw a job posting, applied for the position, interviewed, and were offered employment.

|                |     | ECBSU | FACULTY AND STAFF |               |              |                  |
|----------------|-----|-------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
|                | SEX | RACE  | TOTAL YRS IN ED   | # YRS IN DIST | # YRS AT ECT | ROLE             |
| Ms. Washington | F   | BLACK | 6                 | 4             | 1            | Counselor intern |
| Mr. Clinton    | M   | WHITE | 11                | 2.5           | 2.5          | English          |
| Ms. Kennedy    | F   | BLACK | 8                 | 8             | 5            | Spanish          |
| Ms. Obama      | F   | WHITE | 14                | 9             | 9            | Math             |
| Mr. Roosevelt  | M   | BLACK | 3                 | 2             | 2            | Science          |

Table 3 – ECB Faculty Demographics

The members of the focus group were asked to identify the Core Principles of ECHS. Mr. Clinton stated “college and career ready”, to which everyone else agreed. Mr. Clinton added that he thought the Core Principles dealt with smaller classroom sizes, lower student/teacher ratio, and provided more face-to-face time between teacher and student. Ms. Washington shared that the Core Principles provided students with exposure to college and helped with the transitioning to college. Mr. Roosevelt added that he thought the Core Principles provided leadership opportunities and had a community service/service learning focus.

### *Principal Leadership*

The ECB focus group was asked to identify the leadership characteristics they desired in an ECHS principal. Mr. Roosevelt exclaimed “innovative”. Ms. Kennedy chimed in with “transformational, transparent, and inclusive”. According to Ms. Washington, an ECHS principal should be “relational, have good work ethics...someone who promotes creative freedom”. The

characteristics Ms. Obama desired include a disciplinarian and someone is motivational to both staff and students. Lastly, Mr. Clinton shared that he wanted “someone who leads rather than hold your hands”. He also added he did not want a micromanager and that his ideal ECHS principal would “inspire rather than demand”.

When the partakers of the focus group were asked to describe the leadership style of their principal, Mr. Bark, they used a variety of adjectives to describe him. They included:

- passionate
- transparent
- observant
- compassionate
- relational

Other statements used to describe Mr. Bark include “he lets me do my job” and “he is hands-on and has an open-door policy”. One faculty stated that Mr. Bark is “very human--he wouldn’t say that he is without fault. I like that!” Another faculty member shared that their principal was “an open book and family-oriented”. Roosevelt stated he felt empowered by his principal while Ms. Kennedy concluded that “we are family-focused and oriented because of our size. Our principal stresses that this is our school and not his school”.

There were a lot of sentiments shared when the focus group was asked to describe the leadership styles of any principals for which they had previously worked. Roosevelt simply stated “traditional”. Ms. Kennedy was a little more passionate with her response. She stated,

“I have worked for two principals--one was good and one was negative. The negative principal didn't focus on core classes; he only was concerned about AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) and AMO (Annual Measurable Objectives). He was a Level 1 leader – people only followed him because of his title of principal. I want someone who takes me seriously...if principal doesn't take me seriously, then the students won't take me seriously either”.

Ms. Obama added that her principal was very rational, not impulsive, and that he took a holistic approach to dealing with situations at school. Ms. Washington shared some of the views of Ms. Kennedy in regards to the two principals for which she has worked. Ms. Washington described one principal as being “thick, close-minded, and a micromanager”, while she said the other principal was “genuine, compassionate, and really thought outside of the box”. Mr. Clinton had worked with many principals and he described characteristics of each principal- one was “very diligent” and “stayed true to the school and went down with the ship--completely overwhelmed”. Mr. Clinton described another principal he worked with as being overwhelmed by the system – “distant and bureaucratic”. Clinton also described previous principals he worked with as “greedy and money focused,” as well as “insane, defunct” and “distant--she didn't know my name or staff's names”.

Interestingly, there were mixed reactions to the question of whether an ECHS principal requires a different style of leadership than a principal of a traditional high school. Washington expressed that she did not think a different style of leadership was needed. “It boils down to approach – as long as you can adapt and learn and are willing to try different things,” Ms. Washington shared. Ms. Kennedy contributed, “I think special training is definitely needed for

running smaller schools”. She added “being on a college campus, training on protocols and operations is needed”. She also conveyed that ECHS principals had to learn how to handle situations differently than they would on a traditional high school campus because campus police would sometimes be involved. Clinton uttered that an ECHS principal need to “be oriented into situation”. He also added that “we ask kids in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to be adults on college campus. It is important that the principal know or learn how to deal with young people”.

## COMPARATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

### Principals

Both Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark shared many attributes. They both have a passion for what they do. It was evident from their dialogue that they view their work as meaningful and purposeful. They both had completed master’s program in Educational Administration at top-tier state universities. Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark had been principal of their respective schools for at least three years or more. Both schools have been recognized for attaining a 100% graduation rate under their leadership.

Neither Mrs. Forest nor Mr. Bark felt that their principal preparation programs or training prepared them to lead ECHS. As Mrs. Forest said the principal preparation program and training “gives you theory, not the job specifics”. Mr. Bark stated that a lot of things are just not covered that would help an ECHS principal to be successful. In many ways, both principals agreed that they had to learn on the job as they went along. In Mrs. Forest’s case, she was the founding principal of ECT and so she had to not only learn what it takes to have a successful ECHS but

she also had to communicate with Central Office and college staff who did not know what an ECHS was or how it operated. Mr. Bark pointed out that running an ECHS between two entities--public school and college--created a lot of politics and bureaucracy. In order to get anything done, an ECHS principal has to be able to navigate the political waters, according to Mr. Bark. In addition, neither principal received much training on leading an ECHS prior to assuming the principal's role, other than two day training provided by the New Schools Project. *Leadership Styles*

Interestingly, Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark defined their leadership styles in similar fashion. Mrs. Forest described her leadership style as straightforward, while Mr. Bark said he was definitive. It is clear that both principals are direct in their approaches – whether dealing with students, faculty, or parents. They seek to include their faculty and staff in the decision-making process as it relates to their schools, but they both will make decisions without input from others. Both principals feel it is imperative to hold teachers and staff accountable for doing the jobs to which they have been assigned. I would characterize both principals' leadership styles as situational, in that they utilize whatever strategies they need in order to get the job done. At times, they may delegate assignments and tasks. Other times, they may set the expectations without input from faculty and staff.

It is also interesting to note that both principals of ECHS were pretty accurate about how their staff viewed their respective leadership styles. In the case of Mrs. Forest, she described herself as a “hands-off” leader, in terms of not getting in the way of letting teachers and staff do their respective jobs. Her faculty and staff shared her sentiment as they noted Mrs. Flower allows them to do their jobs, which they appreciated. Conversely, one of Mrs. Forest's faculty members

alluded to the fact she used to be a micromanager, but had grown to trust her faculty and staff.

Many other members of the faculty and staff agreed with this assertion.

Mr. Bark's faculty and staff also agreed with their principal's assessment of his leadership style. Both Mr. Bark and his faculty used the word "transparent", which denotes that he conducts himself in such way that his staff knows what he expects and what to expect from him. Also, both Mr. Bark and his staff conceded that he is unswerving when he makes a decision. Where Mr. Bark referred to this as being "blunt", his staff took it as making a decision and standing by the decision. The staff seemed to respect him for that.

Both Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark identified school administrators for whom they had worked with as the leaders they admired. Mrs. Forest recognized a former assistant superintendent as the leader she admired because she appreciated his straightforward approach, while Mr. Bark identified two former principals he worked under as the leaders he admired because of their focus on academics and people.

It is very evident that both principals of the two ECHS are student-centered when it comes to identifying factors that drive their decision-making process. In the case of Mr. Bark, he is relentless in his quest to make sure every student has a sense of belonging within the school. For him, his own personal experiences in school have molded his approach. He wants to ensure that his students are getting the best education possible, but he feels it is equally important for the school to focus on the whole person. Mr. Bark is committed to providing both academic and emotional support to his students. For Mrs. Forest, she is cognizant of how any decisions she makes affect her students and seeks to include staff and parents in the decision-making process.

To Mrs. Forest, she considers who possesses the information needed to make the best decision with students' needs being the main priority.

Similarly, both principals have faced challenges as ECHS principals. The biggest challenge they both have encountered centers around the relationship with their respective institutions of higher learning. In both cases, the initial response from the college and university on which the two ECHS are located was one of not fully understanding the function and role of the ECHS. Both principals expressed that a lot of time and effort have been spent building relationships with various people and departments on their respective campuses and interweaving the ECHS into the campus culture. Equally, both principals have found it difficult to deal with their own school system's central office personnel. Because of the uniqueness of ECHS, many staff at the district level may not be familiar with the specifics as it relates to ECHS. Often, the school calendars are different from other comprehensive high schools, so when mandated state testing occurs, provisions have to be made for ECHS. In addition, ECHS are often funded differently, with resources coming from the New Schools Project for both of these ECHS. With this being the case, both ECHS have to find ways to use their allocations in accordance with their respective school system's policies.

Based on their experiences, both principals believe that being a ECHS principal requires a different style of leadership. Navigating between two different institutions means that ECHS principals have to operate high schools in a different manner. Both principals pointed to the fact that as a small school, they have to assume many duties and responsibilities that a traditional high school principal does not have to assume. Both principals know that they have to utilize people skills to work with students, staff, parents, and college personnel.

Interestingly, both principals conceded that they have learned to pick their battles. Mrs. Forest puts it as “learn what fight to fight” while Mr. Bark says it is about “be willing to stand in what you believe in”.

### *Core Principles of ECHS*

Of real interest is the very different approach each principal has taken in respect to the core principles of ECHS. For Mrs. Forest, she contended that she has a hard time recruiting the type of students that Early College High Schools were initially designed to serve--mainly students from lower socioeconomic levels, first-generation college students, and students underrepresented in institutions of higher learning. She attributed the difficulty to the ECHS being located near a major research university and nationally-known hospital. The students who apply to attend ECT are students who typically come from homes where one or both parents already have earned a college degree, with many parents having advanced degrees. In addition, the local board of education advocates a system of choice where parents can choose to send their child to the school of their picking outside their residential area. With the appeal of free college tuition and free textbooks, many parents are opting to send their child to ECT. Furthermore, in order to attend ECT, students must complete the associate’s degree within four years of high school while also completing the requirements for high school diploma, making Early College of Tree the most aggressive ECHS in the state. Some students who initially attend ECT will find the work too difficult and opt to return to a comprehensive high school. Also, Mrs. Forest stressed the fact that there is a separate high school--Middle College of Tree (MCT)--on the same community college campus as Early College of Tree. Although MCT serves 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and provides students with the opportunity to take college courses without the stress of earning

an associate's degree, there is often great confusion between the two schools – on the community college campus, at the school system central office, at other schools, or in the community.

For Mr. Bark, Early College of Bloom is doing a better job of serving the population for which ECHS were designed to serve: 70% of the student body at ECB qualifies for free or reduced lunch, signifying that many of the families fall at or below the lower socioeconomic level. In addition, 60% of the students represent first-generation college students and almost all of the students identify in one or more of the racial minorities groups. Mr. Bark finds it difficult to gather this data as he has found that parents and students are not always forthcoming with such information. Much of the data acquired is obtained when students come in for interviews. Like Mrs. Forest, Mr. Bark acknowledged that he is competing with comprehensive high schools in the district, but he has an added layer – there are multiple ECHS schools in his district and another ECHS school located on the same university campus. The competition between ECHS for students sometimes makes it difficult to attract the type of students who could be successful at ECB.

### **Focus Groups of Faculty and Staff**

The focus groups of the respective Early College High Schools offered descriptive feedback of their principal's leadership styles and leadership styles of principals in general. It is interesting to note that the focus group at Early College of Tree had 91% of faculty participate in the focus group as compared to just 50% of the faculty at Early College of Bloom. There was a wide range of educational experiences, from student teacher to brand new teacher to teachers with over 30 years of experience. The overwhelming majority of the faculty and staff chose to

work at an ECHS, with only one teacher at ECT being placed at her school through a surplus situation, where her teaching position was eliminated at her previous school due to low student enrollment and she was placed there due to her teacher contract.

### *Core Principles*

It is worth noting that neither groups of faculty and staff could identify the core principles of ECHS. When asked the question, members of both groups described similar characteristics, like smaller classroom sizes, personalization of learning, and exposure to college. Universally, all members of both groups identified “college and career ready” as a core principle. Only one member of the focus group at ECT referred to the partnerships between college and high schools as a core principle.

### *Leadership Styles*

Many adjectives were given to describe the leadership styles they desired in an ECHS principal. Members of both groups wanted to see an ECHS principal who was a visionary, transparent, approachable, relational, and inclusive. They did not desire to see an ECHS principal who was a micromanager. Clinton put it eloquently when he said that an ECHS principal should be “someone who leads rather than hold your hands...inspire rather than demand”.

Just as many words were used to identify the desired leadership styles of ECHS principals, both focus groups were very descriptive in their assessments of previous principals for whom they had worked. Both groups were quick to point out the perceived negative characteristics or leadership styles. Terms such as “dictator” (Silver), “sociopath” (Orange), “defunct and criminal” (Clinton) and “close-minded” (Washington) were used with ease in

describing former principals. A member of both groups (Gray and Clinton) thought their former principals were “ladder climbers” and only viewed their positions as a step to loftier positions. However, members of both groups also identified positive characteristics as well. Participants in both groups have experienced working with principals who were genuine and supportive (Green, Silver, Washington, and Kennedy), as well as principals who were hard-working (Orange, Clinton).

All of the participants of the focus group at ECT wholeheartedly agreed that the principal of ECHS needed a different style of leadership than the principal of a comprehensive high school, whereas only four out of five members of the focus group at ECB agreed with that statement. Staff at both schools (Pink, Green, and Kennedy) acknowledged that maneuvering and operating a high school on a community college or university campus was different and required a different set of skills. Members of both groups recognized that an ECHS principal has to be skilled in dealing with first-generation college students and younger students (Pink and Clinton). In addition, from the dialogues in both groups, staffs at both schools believe there should be a special orientation for ECHS principals to train on the different aspects of ECHS that are unique for their schools. However, only one staff member at Early College of Bloom (Washington) disagreed with this declaration. According to Ms. Washington, she believed that the approach taken by an ECHS principal determined his or her success. She added that the key was to “...adapt and learn and be willing to try different things”.

### **Chapter Summary**

The twelve principal interview questions and the nine focus group questions provided a large amount of data for identifying principal leadership styles in Early College High Schools in North Carolina and in answering the question whether a different style of leadership was needed to lead an ECHS. The two principals of the ECHS interviewed provided plentiful data to define their leadership styles, the type of preparation and training they received in order to perform their duties, challenges and barriers they have encountered, and what leadership qualities they believe ECHS principals should possess.

Similarly, the various faculty and staff members at both ECHS schools provided rich feedback on the desired leadership qualities they wanted in an ECHS principal, how they perceived the leadership styles of their current ECHS principals and the leadership styles of previous principals for whom they have worked, as well whether they thought that ECHS principals required a different style of leadership.

In comparing the two ECHS schools, the ECHS principals shared many attributes and shared many experiences. Their different approaches to addressing the core principles of ECHS were also noted as well. Likewise, a comparison of the two focus groups of the respective schools showed that faculty and staff shared many viewpoints and perceptions about principal leadership in general and as it relates to ECHS schools.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chapter Five discusses the purpose of the study, the research questions, and summarizes the relationship that exists between the collected data and the original research questions proposed in Chapter One. This chapter will also include implications for practice as well as recommendations and suggestions for future research.

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership styles utilized by two principals of Early College High Schools (ECHS) in North Carolina. ECHS schools are unique schools in design and function; they are designed to allow students an opportunity to earn college credits – tuition-free and textbook-free – while earning their high school diplomas, and they function on the campuses of institutions of higher learning, allowing students to be acclimated to the college setting early. As such, principals of ECHS schools face different challenges and obstacles than

principals of traditional comprehensive high schools, such as navigating between the two separate entities with radically different norms, cultures, and organizational procedures – the local school system and the institution of higher learning.

Two local boards of education were contacted and permission was sought and given to contact the principals of two Early College High Schools in North Carolina. Upon agreement with the respective principals, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each principal and a focus group comprised of faculty and staff was held at each respective ECHS school. In addition, document and historical analysis were used to support the findings of this research. This study examined the perceptions of the principal and faculty and staff of two ECHS schools in North Carolina to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership styles used by two principals of Early College High School in North Carolina?
2. How do teachers and staff in two Early College High Schools in North Carolina perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?

### *Summary of Findings*

Research question # 1: What are the leadership styles used by two principals of Early College High Schools in North Carolina?

The findings of this study revealed that both principals of the Early College High Schools use situational leadership, a style of leadership where no one particular style of leadership is dominant and various characteristics of different leadership style are used as needed (Northouse, 2013). Both ECHS principals were task-oriented and were committed to providing the best

educational environment for students to be successful. At times, both principals utilized aspects of authoritative leadership, as evident by Mr. Bark and Mrs. Forest, who clearly noted that at times they both set the expectations and directions of their school without input from faculty and staff (Sergiovanni, 1992; Yukl, 1994).

At other times, both ECHS principals display elements of transactional leadership, where the school environment is characterized by a work system that defines the tasks and spells out clearly performance expectations (Lashway, 1999). This was evident based on Mr. Bark's assertion that he wanted a school of leaders. He expected that since all faculties and staff had degrees that they should be able to conduct and govern themselves accordingly. Given a task or expectation, Mr. Bark felt that it was not unreasonable to expect each member of his staff to complete that task. Mrs. Forest, too, exhibited traits of a transactional leader in that she expected her staff members to perform their assigned duties and she conducted performance assessments through teacher observations, classroom walkthroughs, and data analysis of student work.

In addition, the finding of this study showed that both Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark aspired to be transformational leaders within their ECHS schools. They both acknowledged that in their respective environments, it is important to appeal to the needs and motives of their faculty and staff and to evoke emotions from them to inspire them to work to their full potential (Northouse, 2013). This was especially important to Mr. Bark, who desired to make sure all of his students at ECBSU had the opportunity to be successful in school in every aspect. He found that appealing to the needs and emotions of his faculty and staff awoke in them the desire to do more for their students

Interestingly, Mrs. Forest exuded elements of “*laissez-faire*” leadership at times while serving as ECHS principal. Her self-assessment that she is a “hands-off” leader lends credence to the notion that she allows her teachers and staff the chance to perform their respective jobs and duties without a lot of interruption. As Barnett, Marsh and Craven (2005) revealed in their research, “*laissez-faire*” leadership can have a positive impact within a school environment. Mrs. Forest’s faculty and staff at ECT appreciate the latitude, freedom, and confidence that she has in them to teach and serve their students.

Research question # 2: How do teachers and staff in two Early College High Schools in North Carolina perceive the leadership styles of their school principals?

In analyzing the results related to research question #2, the data from both focus groups conducted at the respective ECHS schools revealed that the faculty and staff had pretty accurate perceptions of the leadership styles of their principals. In both situations, it was interesting to note how closely the views of the faculty and staff about their principal’s leadership style mirrored how the principal characterized his or her own leadership style.

In addition, the two principals were remarkably able to predict what their respective staff and faculty would say about them as well. For example, Mrs. Forest stated that her staff would state she is “hands-off” and allows them to do their thing. This sentiment was supported by Ms. Green, who shared that although Mrs. Forest was once showed characteristics of a micromanager, she had grown to be “more free” and allowed them flexibility to do their jobs. Similarly, Mr. Bark said that his staff would describe him as a direct person. His staff shared this depiction of him, as they described him as being transparent. In both focus groups, the faculty

and staff who participated felt that their respective principals supported them in their respective roles and that their principal was a good leader for their schools.

In both focus groups, the faculty and staff viewed their respective principal as being more of a transformational leader than the ECHS principals described themselves to be. In both of the focus groups, faculty and staff who participated often aroused feelings and emotions that suggested they felt empowered by their ECHS principal to be an active participant in making their respective ECHS school the best ECHS. This idea is supported by Bass (2000) who stated that when staff and faculty were conscious of their individual roles, responsibilities, and contributions to school, then there is evidence that the leader of that school is an effective transformational leader. Similarly, neither focus group alluded to situations where they felt their ECHS principals ever attempted to use the “power of position” to intimidate or force them to do or perform their duties of their jobs (Bass, 2000).

Furthermore, an analysis of the data from both focus groups revealed that the principals of both ECHS schools practiced elements of situational leadership. Both principals intentionally provided support to their respective staff and sought the input of their staff and faculty as appropriate, while simultaneously allowing their faculty and staff to grow professionally. This data supported Chell (1995), who noted that situational leadership is categorized by four traits- coaching, directing, supporting, and delegating. From the data gathered through the focus group, there is evident that both principals incorporated the elements of coaching and supporting into their leadership styles. The coaching element is evident through both Mrs. Forest and Mr. Bark fostering two-way communication between them and their respective faculties and staff and creating buy-in into each principal’s vision or goal for the ECHS (Chell, 1995). The supporting

element is incorporated in the ECHS principals' leadership styles by their deliberate focus on building and maintaining relationships with faculty, staff, and students, which members of both focus groups readily acknowledged.

### **Implications for Research**

This study adds to the body of evidence demonstrating that leadership behaviors are observable and measurable in the role of school principals. While each style of leadership brings certain elements to light and at times may be best suited for the environment, in this case a school setting, it is clear that the best style of leadership is situational leadership. It is clear that principals must use the leadership tactics and approach that is applicable to the context of the specific school, taking into account the available resources, personnel, and student body characteristics (Dinham, 2004). ECHS principals should also consider their own personal attributes and their own understanding of leadership as they consider what style or styles of leadership they will utilize in leading their ECHS.

Bass and Avolio (1994) suggested that transformational and transactional leadership styles are two distinct types of leadership and effective leaders use aspects of both styles. It is apparent that no one style of leadership works in all schools. This is especially true when Early College High Schools (ECHS) are taken into consideration. ECHS schools were founded and designed with the intent of providing an opportunity for students traditionally under-represented in higher education settings to experience and earn college credits while meeting the requirements for their high school diplomas; to be a joint collaboration between local education

agencies and institutions of higher learning to provide students with up to two years of transferable college credits or a two-year degree free of charge (Lieberman, 2004).

As Yukl (1998) pointed out, a transformational leader acts with optimism and confidence in his or her actions with his subordinates. Members of both ECHS focus groups recognized that their principals acted with confidence in executing their respective jobs. ECT5 stated implicitly that Mrs. Forest had “learned confidence” over the years at principal of Early College of Tree. Similarly, Mr. Bark’s staff said he was optimistic in his dealing with students, staff, and parents alike. This is also supported by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), who contended that transformational leaders work through and with other people to motivate and bring about a change to positively influence student achievement.

This study analyzed the leadership styles of principals in Early College High Schools (ECHS) in North Carolina. The following suggestions are made for future research:

1. Further research should be conducted with more ECHS principals in North Carolina through a quantitative study to get a better depiction of the leadership styles used by ECHS principals, including ECHS in different regions, and to make generalizations;
2. Research should be conducted to show a comparison of the characteristics of effective ECHS principals and effective high school principals;
3. Another investigation should analyze how many ECHS schools are actually staying true to the core principles of ECHS and the obstacles those schools face in meeting the core principles;

4. Research could be done on the relationship between the ECHS principals and two year and four year colleges and universities, identifying successes, challenges, and obstacles;
5. Research could be done on a wider scale to study the faculty and staff of ECHS schools to identify characteristics they view as essential in effective ECHS principals.

### **.Implications for Practice**

Due to the uniqueness of ECHS schools, by design, purpose, and function, it is fundamentally clear that principals who are given the challenge and responsibility of leading ECHS schools have to be suited with unique and specific tools and skills in order to help them to be successful in their roles. Often, ECHS principals have to serve in many capacities--leader, recruiter, counselor, advisor, and liaison--that principals of a traditional high schools may not be asked to serve. With this being the case, it is imperative that local education school systems, institutions of higher learning, and principal preparation programs consider how to offer ECHS principals the opportunity to gather the required skill set needed to fully implement ECHS schools in order to maximize student achievement.

Traditional principal preparation programs and training often do not take into consideration that all principals and school leaders will be asked to lead non-traditional schools, like ECHS. Future principals should be required to spend part of their internship in nontraditional schools like ECHS so that they can gain an understanding of the similarities and differences in the models of the schools and to help prospective principals determine what are the best teaching and learning practices from each environment they can incorporate into their own principal leadership style. Both Bark and Forest acknowledged that their formal principal training did not prepare them for their current roles. Bark wanted additional training in marketing

and recruitment and strategies on how to work between the different institutions. Forest, too, felt that her principal preparation program did not consider principals may become leaders of nontraditional schools.

Staff development and training in the following key areas would be most beneficial to those aspiring to ECHS principals, including:

- Marketing and recruiting;
- College administration, including college scheduling, college finance;
- Grant administration
- Maneuvering the macro-political and micro-political arenas of both local school systems and postsecondary institutions.

In North Carolina, new ECHS principals are invited to participate in a two-day training through the New Schools Project. However, this training typically inducts new ECHS principals on the principles of the New Schools Project, not on the strategies and factors ECHS principals should consider in leading their schools. In addition, there are a few ECHS schools are not part of the New Schools Project network, which means that principals of those ECHS schools often find themselves isolated from any additional support or resources, other than those are provided internally by the local school systems.

Local boards of education and superintendents may want to consider becoming more familiar with the Early College and Middle College models as viable options for students who may need a different educational environment to experience academic success and to help address the achievement gaps between subgroups of students, such as those students who may be

identified as lower socioeconomically disadvantaged or who belong to groups who are typically underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. They should develop a stronger understanding and knowledge base of the role and function of an ECHS principal and understand the characteristics needed for an ECHS principal to be effective. This information would be crucial in helping them to hire the right person who can meet the needs of the students they will lead. Roundtable discussions between ECHS principals and superintendents and other key central office personnel would allow for mutual understanding and respect for the distinctive roles that ECHS principals perform.

Policymakers could study the role and impact of Early College High Schools to see the benefits of this type of school environment and its role in increasing the graduation rate of students from high schools and the college acceptance rate of students, particularly those students underrepresented in postsecondary education. This data could help policymakers to develop policies to support and encourage the establishment and maintenance of ECHS schools.

### **Chapter Summary**

Based on the principal interview and focus group discussion at two Early College High Schools in North Carolina, leadership styles used by ECHS principals were identified. The principals interviewed exhibited the components of situational leadership, with traits of transformational, transactional, and “*laissez-faire*” leaderships intertwine. There was a correlation between how the ECHS principals described their leadership styles and the perception of the faculty and staff at the respective ECHS schools of their principal’s leadership style.

This conclusion is important because it provides evidence that leadership behaviors are observable, measurable, and do make a difference in a nontraditional educational environment like ECHS. ECHS principals need a different set of skills, knowledge, and attributes. These findings provided implications for research and practice to help policymakers, boards of education, superintendents, and principal preparation programs consider how to better recruit, hire, and support ECHS principals. Recommendations for future study were also provided.

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APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Principal Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been working as an educator?
2. Where and how did you receive your principal/administrator training?
3. How long have you been a principal/administrator? How long have you served as principal/administrator of this ECHS? Where you ever a principal of a traditional high school?
4. How well do you feel your principal/administrator training and preparation prepared you to be principal of this ECHS?
5. What type(s) of training did you receive prior to becoming an ECHS principal?
6. How do you define your leadership style?
7. How do you think teachers would define your leadership style?

8. When it comes to making decisions within your school, what factors drive or motivate you? Please provide an example of this in action.
9. What are some of the challenges you have encountered as an ECHS principal? How did you overcome them?
10. Are there obstacles to obtaining the core principles of an ECHS? If yes, what are they?
11. Is there a leader that you admire? If so, why? What characteristics do they possess?
12. Based on your experiences, do you think a principal of an ECHS school requires a different style of leadership than the principal of a comprehensive traditional high school? Explain your answer.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Focus Group Questions**

1. Each participant – how many years have you been an educator? In this school? In this district? What is your area of expertise/certification?
2. Have you ever worked in a comprehensive traditional high school setting? If so, for how long?
3. Did you choose to work at ECHS? Share how you came to work here at this school.
4. Can you identify the Core Principles of ECHS?
5. What leadership characteristics do you wish you had in terms of a principal at this ECHS?
6. How would you describe your principal's leadership style?

7. Have you ever worked under the guidance of another principal, either in this school or any school? What do you recall about that principal's leadership style?
8. Based on your experiences, do you think a principal of an ECHS school requires a different style of leadership than the principal of a comprehensive traditional high school? Explain your answer.
9. Is there anything else you would like to add as it relates to your principal's leadership style?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Principal Letter to Participate**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is William Wynn, III, and I am a doctoral student at NC State University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study regarding principal leadership styles used in Early College High Schools.

During the course of the study, confidentiality will be maintained in the following ways:

- No identifying data will be connected to your responses,

- All findings will be reported in such a way that your answer, your school, or your school district will be identifiable.

The results of the study may be published in scientific research journals or presented at professional conferences. However, your name and identity will not be revealed and your record will remain confidential.

Your participation will involve a scheduled face-to-face interview. A week prior to the interview, I will email you a copy of the interview questions. On the day of the interview, I will record your responses with a digital device as well as take notes. Also, I would like to interview your teachers in a focus group setting on the same day, if possible. If scheduling will not allow, I would like to conduct focus group within a week of the interview with you.

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, you may contact me at 336-734-7445 (W) or 336-345-7965 (C). You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Lance Fusarelli at 919-513-0507.

Sincerely,

William Wynn, III